Over There

WITH THE MARINES AT CHATEAU THIERRY

CAPT. RALPHSON

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OVER THERE SERIES

THE MARINES AT CHATEAU THIERRY

THE CANADIANS AT VIMY RIDGE

THE DOUGHBOYS AT ST. MIHIEL

PERSHING'S HEROES AT CANTIGNY

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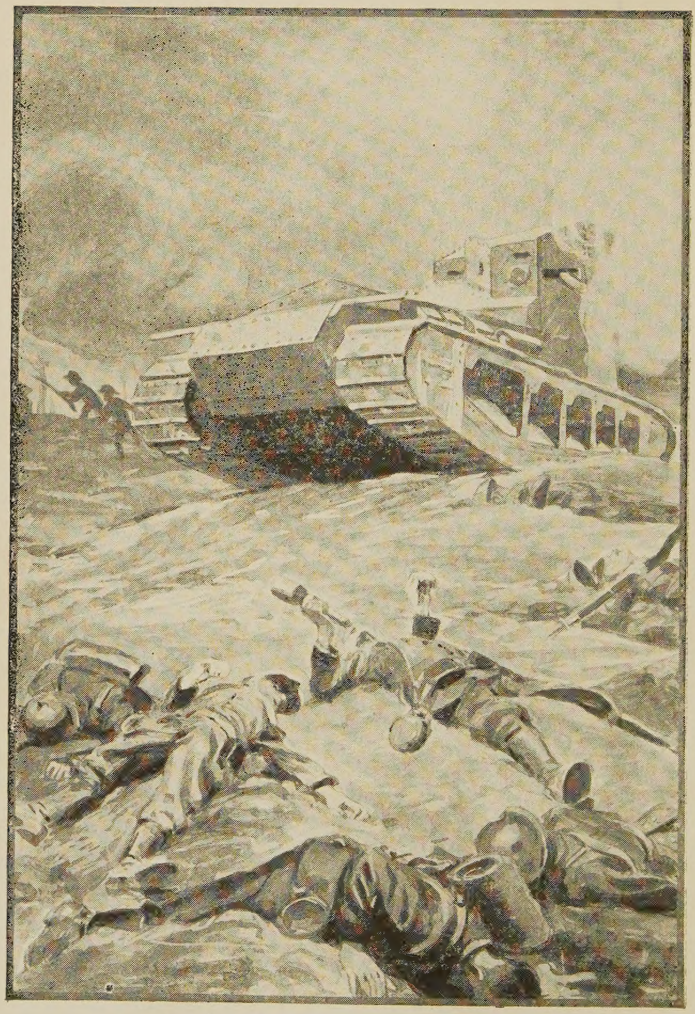

THE GERMANS GAVE WAY UNDER THE TERRIBLE FIRE OF THE TANKS.

{The Marines at Chateau Thierry}

OVER THERE
WITH
THE MARINES
AT
CHATEAU THIERRY

By

CAPT. GEORGE H. RALPHSON

Author of

OVER THERE WITH THE DOUGHBOYS AT ST. MIHIEL, OVER THERE WITH THE CANADIANS AT VIMY RIDGE, OVER THERE WITH PERSHING'S HEROES AT CANTIGNY

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Over There with the Marines
at
Chateau Thierry

CHAPTER I

PHIL AND TIM

TOP SERGEANT PHIL SPEED did not know exactly where he was when the long train of trucks bearing hundreds of khaki-clad American Marines stopped at a small town within easy gun-roar of the battle front in France. They were making little demonstration now. For weeks they had been cheering and been cheered until their throats became sore and well again—calloused, as it were. So spontaneous and so nearly universal had been the enthusiastic reception extended to them everywhere that it seemed as if every person who didn't yell his head off must be pro-kaiser.

With the noise of battle becoming more and made distinct through the rumble, roar, and rattle of trucks and ordnance racing toward the scene of conflict into which they themselves

were about to plunge, the hearts of these messengers of liberty were not so gay as they had been for weeks, aye, months, before. Everywhere, among all sorts and conditions of men, even among fighting patriots, there are bound to be a few "smart" ones who forget the proprieties sometimes as their bright ideas go skyrocketing. And this sort of gay wight was not lacking even among the pick of America's young manhood; but for once the gayest of them were serious and sober minded.

The person who would joke in the face of death, or with a messenger of eternity lurking in the vicinity must be a philosopher "to get away with it." Phil had no idea of putting the thing in such language, but if somebody had stepped up close to him and whispered the conceit in his ear, he probably would have responded, "That fits the situation exactly." Still a considerable period of time elapsed before he was able to dispel all doubt as to the occasion of such unwonted sobriety.

"I wonder if we're not all cowards, and if that isn't the reason we've all stopped our noise," he mused. "I hope we don't turn tail and run lickety-cut when we see a big bunch o' boches swinging over the top at us."

As if in reply to his musing, Timothy Turner, a training-camp chum, who stood at his elbow

in the midst of the throng of soldiers waiting for orders to move along, spoke thus rather grimly:

"We're quite a solemn bunch, aren't we, Phil? I guess what we need is the explosion of a few bombs in our midst to get us good and mad."

"Maybe," Phil replied, regarding his friend meditatively. "Well, it won't be very long before we'll have a chance to find out. Do you think an explosion a few feet away from you would make you mad, Tim?"

"Yes, I do," the latter replied unhesitatingly. "I believe it would make me want to telescope with the next shell that came whistling along."

Tim was a kind of bullet-headed Yank, "built on the ground," his school-boy friends used to say. Really he looked as if he might be accepted as a personification of that irresistible force which would create "the most powerful standstill" if it struck an immovable object. But in spite of his bullet-headness, Tim was anything but dull. Both officers and fellow soldiers regarded him hopefully as one of the prospective star fighters of the regiment because of his mental keenness as well as his physical prowess.

Phil was built along different lines. He was

strong and athletic, but he would hardly have been expected to be able to push over a stone wall. Whether or not he was more intelligent than Tim may be a matter for debate. It may be admitted, perhaps, that he was not so shrewd, but if they had both lived in the middle ages, Phil undoubtedly would have listened with interest to the first declaration that the world was round, while Tim would just as surely have repelled it with derision. But in business Phil might have fallen a comparatively easy victim to the wiles of a trickster, where as the cleverest "con man" would have had to get up very early in the morning to catch Tim napping.

So here we have a double-barreled standard for measuring intelligence among men and among boys. Shall we call Phil more intelligent than Tim, or vice versa? Let us dismiss the debatable question without answer, while we admit that they were both intelligent, but different; and in spite of their difference—some would say "in consequence of their difference"—they were very good friends.

CHAPTER II

FOUR KILOS ON HOBNAILS

"BATTALION!" called out the major.

"Company!" the captain followed, as it were, with the next breath.

"Attention!" continued the battalion commander.

The line was quickly formed, two deep, officers in position, the major in attitude of review.

"At ease!" was the next order which indicated "something coming."

"Men," he said with an incisiveness of tone indicating that his words would be brief, "word has just reached me that the officers of the enemy division that you are soon to meet welcome you with expressions of contempt. They say you are soft and will melt before the Hun armies like wax over white heat. Will you show them you can go through fire hot enough to melt steel?"

The yell that greeted this question set at rest all doubt that may have inspired the "wonder" which came to Phil's mind a few minutes before as to their courage. And nobody yelled louder or more fiercely than Phil

did. After it was over he heaved a sigh of relief.

"That's what we needed," he muttered.

"What did we need?" asked Tim, who heard the remark.

Phil had no opportunity to reply. The major was giving orders again.

"Attention!"

"Squads, right!" the superior officer added, and immediately there was a swinging half-about along the line, and a column of American Marines, four abreast, was marching up the street that led away from the detrucking point.

Then followed a hike of four kilometers (two and a half miles) along the Paris-Metz road. After journeying on hobnailed soles this distance, the order was given to fix bayonets.

Phil and Tim were good enough soldiers by this time to accept everything as it came and not to look for too much that was not in evidence. They had had try-out experience at Verdun and, along with other rapidly seasoning warriors of their regiment, had given a good account of themselves. And yet, in spite of all this curiosity-crushing experience, they could not help looking just a little expectantly for a camouflaged line of "bloomin' boches" upon whom to use their one-tined pitchforks when the order was given to "fix bayonets."

"Does it mean charge?" both of them longed to ask somebody, and after this question they realized must follow another equally important:

Where was the mysterious enemy?

It proved, however, to be only a precautionary move to guard against surprise while advancing through a wheatfield. There might be a score or two of machine-gun nests in that field, Phil reasoned. But then, he wondered how that could very well be, as it must mean that the gunners had made their way undiscovered through the front line, which was a mile farther on. However, the surmise proved to be in error, for nothing of livelier nature than a flock of hens and turkeys was encountered. Presently a halt was ordered at a group of deserted farm buildings, where quarters were established pending the development of further plans.

Meanwhile there were other battalions following, and the country round about was rapidly becoming a concentration camp of reserves, who were sent forward in sections to take positions in the front line as rapidly as way was prepared for them, the French moving out to take positions in other sections. Phil and Tim were pleased when it became apparent that they would not be ordered ahead before

the next day, for they were weary from exertion and loss of sleep and longed as much as anything else to be in vigorous, fresh condition when it came their time to meet the merciless, unscrupulous foe in battle.

There was nothing radically new in this experience to any of the Marines billeted at this place less than two kilometers from the front line, which was being pressed hard by the enemy. All of them had seen a very real kind of practice service along with the French at Verdun, and so there was little to arouse their wonder in the sights and sounds of rumbling camions, tanks and artillery as they were rushed hither and thither, the shouts of officers and drivers, aeroplanes soaring overhead, and the whistle of an occasional shell fired with apparent random purpose and exploding far beyond the range of serious mischief. These sights and sounds were fast merging into the obscurity and quiet of darkness and inaction as Phil and Tim lay down under a large apple tree, resolved to get as much rest as possible before the next daybreak.

"I've been wanting to ask you a question ever since we detrucked from those lorries four kilos up the road," said Tim after the two boys had lodged themselves in the privacy of a "ten-foot sector" of the orchard. As he spoke, he

picked up a full-grown apple from the ground and sunk his teeth into it.

"This apple isn't very ripe," he observed, indicating by his digression that the question on his mind was not as vital as the importance of appeasing his appetite or of winning the war. "But the juice is sweet and pungent and I'm going to make a cider press of my jaws and squeeze the beverage down my throat."

"If you haven't forgotten your question, you may put it to me," Phil returned more to the point.

"I was wondering what you meant when you remarked, 'That's what we needed,' after the major made his little speech to us and we yelled our throats hoarse to prove we weren't soft," said Tim. "Were you afraid we really were soft?"

"No, not exactly," Phil replied. "But I just had a kind o' longing for proof that we weren't."

"But we'd proved ourselves at Verdun, hadn't we?" Tim reasoned.

"Yes and no," answered Phil. "At Verdun we fought all right, but we had a lot o' French vets right at our elbows to ginger our nerve. Here, I understand, they're going to give us a front all our own, ten or fifteen miles. I was talking to Corporal Ross about it. He's been

doing messenger service at the major's head quarters and picked up a good deal of informa tion. He says we're bound for a place called Belleau Wood. The French call it Bois de Bel leau. The Huns, you know, have been pressing the French pretty hard all the way from Rheims to Soissons, and we've been sent to re lieve the French at this point so that they can stop the enemy at other points. But I've got a suspicion that a lot more American boys will be thrown in about here and we're going to have a chance to make ourselves famous in the next few days."

"It's up to us to make good," declared Tim with characteristic bullet-headed doggedness. "The Marines have been criticised a good deal lately. Some say we ought to be eliminated from the service."

"We've got to make good," Phil echoed e phatically. "The reputation of the Mari is at stake."

CHAPTER III

DIGGING IN

SERGEANT PHIL was a year older than Corporal Tim. The latter, unbeknown to anybody except himself and his parents, had entered the Marine Service in not the most regular manner, but it was real patriotism that had caused him to misrepresent his age, which was the only bar to his eligibility. A wait of eight months longer would have put him "over the top" in this respect but he decided not to wait. He looked 18 years old, and boldly declared this to be his age, and, as some of his slangy boy friends would have said, he got away with it. When his Philadelphia father learned of his enlistment, the bullet-headed youngster was already on his way for probation at the Paris Island, South Carolina, recruit depot.

Then Mr. Turner thought twice and decided not to interfere. He was thoroughly patriotic and concluded that if his son had put over anything on anybody it was on the kaiser.

Phil was a more regular sort of fellow in such matters. He would never have misrepre-

sented his age in order to gain admittance into Uncle Sam's fighting force. If he had not been able to pass all the tests on merit, he would have sought to aid the government in some other branch of service. This is not intended, by contrast, as a serious reflection on Tim. The latter was different. He saw no particular harm in adding a year on his age if thereby he might help to shorten the reign of the Prussian despot.

Tim kept his secret religiously, fearing lest he be sent home or assigned to disgrace service if it should come to the knowledge of his superior officers.

Phil and Tim were disappointed in their expectation that they would move early in the morning following their arrival at the deserted farm to a position in the front line. But they were not disappointed in their anticipation of thrilling activities before the close of the day. Until late in the afternoon the entire battalion was busy perfecting arrangements for relieving the Frenchies in this sector.

The excitement of the day came at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The firing at the front was heavy, but not of intensity such as they had witnessed at Verdun. But it seemed to grow hotter and nearer, so that the only conclusion the Americans could draw was that

the boches were driving the French back through the woods.

Suddenly the company to which Phil and Tim belonged was thrown into confusion by the bursting of a shell on the roof of the barn in which they had sought shelter. This would have been a poor place for them if they had been under constant fire from the enemy. But it had served well enough against injury from shrapnel, and still better from flying debris heaved in all directions by the explosion of bombs dropped from hostile aeroplanes. That the wrecking of the roof of the barn was effected by the bursting of a cannon shell was evidenced by the shriek that immediately preceded the explosion.

None of those in the barn was killed or injured so severely that he had to be taken to the rear for surgical treatment, but the lieutenant was severely cut on his right arm. Phil sprang to his assistance and helped him to bandage the limb; then they rushed out after the rest of the company. The wounded officer now gave order for all to take to the woods and dig in.

The Marines thus deprived of a shelter rushed back into the roofless building, grabbed up a supply of entrenching tools and then made a dash for the woods. Most of them had

snatched up their guns before making their hurried exit. About halfway between the barn and the woods another shell burst in their midst, killing five and severely wounding a score of others. Almost as if by magic a corps of stretcher-bearers were on the scene. The uninjured scarcely hesitated, and almost in less time than is required to tell it the order to "dig in" was being obeyed with the skill and speed of long practiced teamwork.

The digging-in process was a simple though strenuous task. All of the members of the company not seriously injured by the bursting of the shell were presently spading in the earth for dear life a short distance within the timber. They worked as if according to a systematic, prearranged schedule. If they had been going through a drill performance, under instruction from manual and teacher, their work could hardly have been more nearly true to military form.

Each of these Marines quickly scratched off a rectangular plot about three by five feet and then began to dig. Phil and Tim, who always endeavored to keep as near together as possible in all emergencies where they might be able to aid each other, "dug in" a few feet apart. After they had cut roots and scooped the dirt out to a depth of three or four feet, they dashed

about here and there in the immediate vicinity and gathered dead limbs and brushwood with which each built a shelter at one end of his funk hole, or "stub trench." These shelters were rendered more stable and impervious to rain by heaping on them mounds of loose earth that had been shoveled out of the trenches.

But the disastrous explosion of the two shells seemed to have served as a false alarm as to what ought to be expected for some time thereafter. The fact of the matter is, "nothing happened." Three days they remained "dug in" and not another shell or bomb struck within two hundred yards of any point of the sheltered "stub trenches" of the recently bombarded regiment.

On the evening of the third day they received an order to make a quick march to a shell-shattered village on the front line.

"Now we're going to see some real fighting," Tim prophesied to his friend, as they prepared to obey the order.

He was not mistaken.

CHAPTER IV

GAS MASKS

PHIL and Tim had made good use of their time while in training at Paris Island, so that when they were ordered on board a transport to steam for "somewhere in France," they could boast of being "Jacks of all trades and masters of all" in the hyperbolic parlance of Sea Soldier excellence. They could do pretty nearly everything from the fitting of gun gear to the operation of a wireless outfit or a portable searchlight. Moreover, they were both well qualified to handle machine guns, and Phil was drawing an extra $3 a month as a rifle sharpshooter.

The company to which Phil and Tim belonged was stationed just outside the village. They reached this position at about 2 p. m. and had little more than completed their digging-in operations, when the word was passed along that they would "go over the top" at 4:30

But this announcement was presently countered from headquarters, coupled with a "man-to man message" that scouting aeroplanes and observation balloons had communicated to

headquarters the information that the boches were evidently planning to "come over" at the Yanks. A hurried conference among the officers of the Marines decided then that it would be better strategy to let the enemy come on and get their fill and then counter their decimated forces with a good strong bayonet and hand-grenade drive.

Phil and Tim were near enough to each other to carry on a conversation in ordinary tones, and when the word reached them that they must wait for the enemy to attack them they expressed their disappointment vigorously.

"I hate this waiting business," Phil declared. "We'll never reach Berlin at this rate."

"So do I," responded Tim. "I wonder what those minions of the kaiser think they're going to do. To my mind it's a sign of weakness on their part, making a drive this time o' the day."

"Why?" Phil inquired. "I don't see why it should be a sign of weakness on their part any more than our plan to go over the top at 4:30 is a sign of weakness."

"Maybe not from their point of view. But we know what we've got behind us—millions of men and billions of money. We know, too, that we've got vastly more of these than the boches have. So you see, I have something

more than suspicion to base my theory on that they like to make an attack late in the day so that if they fail they will have the darkness to cover their retreat. I bet that when our record is summed up you'll find that we made most of our dashes against the enemy's lines at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning."

"I hope I'm spared to contemplate such a record," said Phil soberly.

"You don't doubt it, do you?" Tim asked, for he was surprised and disappointed to hear his friend speak so diffidently.

"I was just wondering," Phil replied meditatively.

"See here, Phil," Tim said, shaking his hand toward his soldier comrade; "you're making a big mistake. You're meditating. Do you realize that a soldier should never meditate? He should never even think twice. He's got to do his best thinking the first time."

"What's that got to do with my wondering whether I'm going to come out o' this alive?" Phil inquired.

"It's got this to do with it: It's as bad as writing poetry in a trench. I think you'll agree with me that anybody that does that is a nut. Now, I don't believe I'm going to have my head blown off. Notice that I don't say, 'I don't let myself think I'm going to be killed.' I'm *dead*

sure I'm not going to be killed. Get me?—*dead sure;* not sure dead."

"Sure thing I get you," Phil answered enthusiastically; "that's a peach of an idea. It's too bad all the other soldiers of the Allies haven't got the same idea."

"How do you know they haven't?" Tim demanded quickly.

"I don't know it," Phil admitted with a smile, for he saw what was coming next.

"A fellow must get this pretty much by himself to make the best kind of soldier," Tim said, speaking with the convincing manner of a veteran. "I've heard young fellows talk about going into battle with the expectation of being killed, but that's before the bullets begin to fly and the shells begin to burst. The real soldier is never desperate. The minute you get desperate, that minute you are rattled. The soldier who goes into battle expecting to be killed, goes into battle desperate and is soon rattled. Don't go into battle expecting to be killed; go into battle expecting to kill, kill, kill, and keep on killing."

"Hooray!" said Phil jocularly. "That's what I call war philosophy. Get me? War Phil-osophy for a fighting Phil of Philadelphia."

"Philosophy nothing," Tim snapped back.

"You make me ashamed of your name with your jesting pun. I thought you understood me better than that, Phil. Wartime is no time for philosophy. That's what got a lot of pacifists into trouble and some of them in prison. They weren't philosophers enough to realize that you can't stop to philosophize when somebody is punching you in the nose."

"Gas masks!" yelled Phil suddenly, and similar cries came from others along the timber-sheltered line.

But the warning was not needed by Tim.

Even as he uttered the last word of his soldier's common-sense lecture, he caught a faint whiff of mustard. Instinctively he held his breath, and eight seconds later he was inhaling the pure, safe lung-fuel, "canned oxygen," contained in the reservoir of his mask.

CHAPTER V

A MACHINE-GUN BARRAGE

THAT settled it in Phil's mind. There would be no "over the top" from the enemy lines that night. Probably, after all, he was mistaken in assuming that the boches, conscious of their own insufficiency of reserves, would hesitate to make a morning attack. They were planning to harass the Yanks all night with gas and a hurricane of shells, and in the morning make a charge that would sweep everything before it.

With the putting on of the masks, the conversation between Phil and Tim stopped. It really seemed that the former's soliloquy following this operation was better reasoning than his earlier conjectures had been. The cannonade that followed the "gas wave" was terrific and it seemed that such a barrage must mean something in the nature of a sequence, but they would hardly charge right into the gas they had shelled into the Yank's lines.

But again Phil was privileged to change his mind, and that very suddenly. The bombardment continued until after dark and many shells exploded perilously near the Pershing

forces—a few did fatal damage right in the midst of the waiting Americans at the edge of the woods.

At about 9:30 o'clock this bombardment ceased as suddenly as it had begun. Neither Phil nor Tim had taken part in or witnessed a night attack, except in the nature of a cannonading, since their first experience on the Verdun front, and they were greatly astonished at what came next.

But they were not without warning, for the signal service was on the qui vive constantly, as were also the advance sentries, and about two minutes before there was any sign of the approach of the enemy, word went along the line to be on the lookout for an attack.

"So my first surmise was right, after all," Phil mused. "They're going to attack under cover of the darkness so that they may retreat more successfully if their attack fails."

Another surprise was coming not only to Phil and Tim, but to many other "dug-in" Marines along the American front. It had to do with the character of the attack.

Suddenly the American lines were swept with a sharp, snappy, vicious machine-gun fire. The boches had crept up under cover of the darkness and succeeded in planting a score or

more of machine guns at various places in the timber a hundred yards ahead and started pumping a murderous storm of bullets at the doughboys.

But fortunately it was murderous in sight and sound chiefly, for very few of the Yanks were hit. In the first place, it was almost a random attack, for the muzzles of the guns were elevated a degree or more too high to rake the edges of the funk holes in which the Americans were crouching. Moreover, the intervening trees intercepted many of the bullets, as was evident from the tattoo thuds that could be heard even amid the noisy spitting of the machine guns.

Just what the enemy hoped to accomplish by this method of attack it was difficult at first to determine, although the Yanks were destined to discover very shortly that it was a clever sort of camouflage.

But the cunning boches were destined to discover something, too, and to Phil was due the credit for this rather startling enlightenment of the enemy.

"Tim," he called out to his friend, "I believe that is nothing but a machine-gun barrage intended to throw us off our guard. They're planning a surprise attack."

A "machine-gun barrage" was a new one to

Tim, but he listened respectfully for further explanation.

"We can expect them to come over any minute," Phil continued rapidly. "I've got an idea of how they're going to do it. By the way, I'm going to make a dive over to Lieutenant Stone and tell him what I've got in mind. He's only a few jumps away. He'll probably reprimand me, if he doesn't report me to headquarters, but the suspicion I've got seems to me so important that I'll risk any punishment this side of the firing squad."

The thunder of the cannonade and the sharper rattle of the machine guns were so intense that Phil found it necessary to scream his message to his next-trench neighbor to insure being heard.

"Well, if it's so very important, don't stop to tell me about it, but hurry up and get it where it will do most good," Tim yelled back. "They won't take me by surprise."

A moment later Phil was dashing over the underbrush and among the trees in momentary danger of butting his head against a very solid and substantial interference or of sprawling violently on the ground. But he had surveyed the vicinity carefully before the shadows of evening thickened in the woods and knew pretty accurately where the lieutenant had dug

in. He had to move just as carefully also as if he were stealing along an enemy line of trenches, for some of the American soldiers were likely to discover him and shoot him as a spy.

He succeeded in making his way within a few feet of the lieutenant's trench and, crouching low, began to signal to him by calling his name in graduated rising tones. Presently the officer replied and Phil informed him who he was.

In a few words the sergeant communicated his self-imposed message to his superior officer.

"That is probably the best suggestion that has come from any source on this front since the American Marines were stationed here," remarked Lieutenant Stone. "Now, you get back to your post as fast as ever you can, or I'll order you sent back behind the lines under guard."

Phil darted back gleefully along the rear of the American line and toward his empty funk hole, which he reached with very good caution as well as expedition.

CHAPTER VI

THE BOCHE CHARGE

BEFORE Phil got back to his funk hole, the intelligence he had communicated to Lieutenant Stone had been transmitted over the trench telephone to every camouflaged station, and rapidly thereafter by runners to every man in the line. The message thus delivered was this:

"Look out for an attack while the machine guns are going full blast. They may elevate the muzzles of their machine guns and send their men over the top when it seems impossible for them to leave their trenches without being mowed down with their own fire."

Phil's prediction was fulfilled. Indeed, the preliminary, which constituted, in effect, a signal for the charge, was exceedingly obvious to all the Marines in the front line after they had been advised as to what to expect. It is quite possible that many of them would not have observed the elevation of the streams of machine-gun fire to an angle of forty-five degrees if they had not received Phil's warning; and most of those who might have observed this seemingly reckless waste of "powder and pills" undoubt-

edly would have been puzzled, if not confused, by so strange a phenomenon.

As it was, the Yanks were able to time the attack with remarkable accuracy and met the boches with volleys from their rifles so nearly simultaneous that those of the enemy who were not taken off their feet by the deadly hail of steel-jacketed bullets must almost have been taken off their feet with astonishment. At any rate, the attack failed utterly, not a few of the Marines leaping out of their "trenchettes" and engaging the panic-stricken boches with bayonets or clubbed guns.

It was impossible to get any idea of the number slain in the fight, for although the sky was clear and the stars shone brightly, the moon had not risen and the woods was almost as dark as a pocket. The Americans kept a sharp lookout for the appearance of shadowy forms a few feet away from their intrenchments, and as soon as they saw them creeping cautiously forward they blazed away with good execution.

The Marines were bothered with no more "over the top" from the boches that night, although there was a heavy bombardment from their larger guns located beyond the opposite edge of the woods. When this began, Tim called out to his friend:

"That means they've gone back a respect-

ful distance. We're surely safe from another attack as long as that keeps up. By the way, they're pretty bum marksmen, aren't they? Those shells are dropping far behind us."

"Yes; but we have other lines back there, and they'll get a taste of what is probably meant for us," Phil replied. "Say, there's a wounded fellow lying only a few feet away from me. Somebody else shot him. I was just drawing a bead on him when some good friend tipped him over for me. It wasn't you, was it, Tim?"

"Yep, I'm the fellow," Tim answered modestly. "I'd disposed of the baboon that was coming in my direction and saw the one that was makin' for your hole in the ground, and I said, says I, to myself: 'Phil's well able to take care o' himself, but I don't think he'll be offended if I relieve his soul of the burden of slayin' a man.' So I pulled my trigger, and over went the villainous gink."

"Good work," Phil commended. "I won't criticise you for failing to kill him, for you did far better than I did as it was. You've put at least two serfs of the kaiser out of business, and I didn't even fire my gun at one."

"What'll we do with 'im?" asked Tim. "Pull 'im back behind the lines to wait till the Red Cross comes along?"

"No, we won't pull him," Phil returned more compassionately. "We'll pick him up and carry 'im."

"He doesn't deserve any such gentle handling," Tim objected stubbornly.

"It isn't a question of what he deserves, but the kind of record we Americans want to leave behind us," Phil replied earnestly. "You know how horrified we were by the sinking of the Lusitania and the atrocities in Belgium and northern France. Because of those atrocities we called the whole group of central allies Huns. Do we want to deserve the same title of reproach? Besides, the boches aren't more than half responsible. They were brought up that way. A man can get in the habit of thinking anything that's popular if he drifts with the current."

"Now, you're doing the very thing I warned you against," Tim protested vigorously. "I told you that wartime was no time for any philosophy business."

"And I agreed with you," Phil responded. "You win. Come on and we'll get that fallen foe and hustle 'im back behind the lines. We'll take him any way you say."

The two boys leaped out of their shallow "trenchettes" and picked up the boche and carried him almost gently ten or fifteen feet

to the rear. Just then two relief men dashed up, laid the wounded man on a stretcher and hustled him away.

"Bloodthirsty Tim listened to reason that time," Phil told himself.

"I drove some common sense into Phil's head," Timothy mused. "I hope he keeps it and he'll make a better soldier."

CHAPTER VII

TIMBER FIGHTING

EARLY the next morning a squadron of aeroplanes flew over the American lines dropping bombs and doing considerable damage. But it was not long before they were met by a score of Allied planes, which poured into them such a fusillade of machine-gun bullets that two of them dived to the ground with a crash and the others were driven back behind their own lines.

The cannonading from the German big guns during the night did little damage to the Americans, for most of the shells dropped far to the rear. Moreover, the Yankee field artillery replied with much better marksmanship than that of the boches, as was reported in the morning by scout aviators and balloon observers. But it was not necessary to wait for these reports to get an idea of the devastation effected by the Americans' cannonading. The timber that had shielded the enemy forces, whose attack had been camouflaged by a spitting of machine guns "at the stars," was now a scene of arboreal ruin. The boys decided

that they had never seen quite so abundant an assortment of splintered kindling wood in their lives.

In the course of the day the American lines were advanced to the farther edge of the belt of timber in which the battle of the night had been fought. It seemed that this belt had been entirely cleared of the enemy. Beyond the waste of splintered and contorted forestry was a narrow open stretch of lowland, and beyond this was another woods undoubtedly peopled with outpost of sharpshooters and machine-gun nests. The Yanks did not have to wait long for a verification of this suspicion. Scarcely had they taken up their positions near the edge of the area of green kindling wood when there came a vicious spitting of machine guns and sharpshooters' rifles.

It was exceedingly difficult to bring up the artillery through the shell-and-shrapnel-torn timber for the purpose of raking the opposite woods in a similar manner. There was considerable work for the engineers before this could be done. Meanwhile, however, the commander of the Marines decided not to wait in idleness. Machine-gun corps were stationed behind uprooted trees and splintered stumps and huge boulders and in yawning shell-holes and deep gullies and were presently spitting

away into the opposite timber wherever a nest could be located.

At last several cannon were brought up and a storm of shell and shrapnel was poured into the woods beyond the clearing. This proved to be effective to a considerable extent, for many of the machine guns of the enemy were silenced, as were also a battery or two located behind the enemy's front line.

But certain nests of sharpshooters and machine guns proved to be exceedingly difficult to dislodge and orders were given to take those positions at as little cost as possible, *but take them.* Accordingly a body of Marines were selected for this duty, including the company to which Phil and Tim belonged.

It was a dangerous task, for it meant a charge across an open stretch into another timber in which an uncertain number of the enemy were concealed waiting to receive them with all the advantage of position and concealment on their side. They did not make the fatal error of massed attack that so often characterized the death plunges of the boches. Rather, they scattered out and dashed forward with more or less individual independence and bravery almost unknown among the usually kamerad-encouraged enemy.

"I'm going to try Tim's method of generat-

ing self-confidence," Phil told himself as he dashed with his fellow Marines across the open. "Here it is: I'm going to come out of this without a scratch and I'm going to kill, kill, kill."

He saw several Marines in front and on each side of him fall victims of the accurate shooting of the concealed enemy, but this did not feaze him in the least. He *knew* he was going to dash through successfully and he *knew* he was going to find a hidden machine gun nest and whip it single handed if necessary.

And he was not mistaken. He reached the opposite timber without receiving a scratch. Then followed a more careful procedure to hunt out the pests that were doing everything in their power to make things uncomfortable for the Marines. The latter were armed with rifles and hand grenades, and the timber was soon ringing with evidence of their discoveries.

Phil had charge of a squad that worked as a unit in the scouring of the woods, and Tim was a member of this squad. Alternately they were in hiding in thickets of saplings and bushes or racing ahead to make a swift surprise attack on a machine gun nest located by the sound of firing or the creeping cunning of a camouflaged spy. This handful of Marines cleaned out two nests without the loss of a

man, and then, it appearing that there were no others within the sweep of their advance, they separated in parties of two or three each to hunt for snipers after agreeing on a place of meeting and a call by which Phil might summon them together again whenever he desired.

Phil and Tim, perhaps by force of habit, continued together without other company. The Marines were now driving a considerable rear guard of the enemy ahead of them, principally snipers and machine gunners, who were trailing behind the main body of the defeated boches to facilitate the latter's retreat. Realizing that the remnant of this rear guard was moving more rapidly in its haste to get out of the way of the terrible American butt-or-muzzle riflemen and hand grenade throwers, Phil and Tim put as much speed to their advance as the character of the terrain would permit, hoping to overtake some of the fugitive snipers.

A few minutes after the squad had spread out to cover a larger territory, the two friends arrived at the meadow-like opening into a wooded ravine which appeared to grow deeper and deeper in the direction taken by the fleeing boches. With little hesitation they dashed into the ravine, becoming more cautious, how-

ever, as they entered the timber-shaded lowland with its tangle of ferns and shrubbery.

It was really a dangerous undertaking, but these boys were in a dangerous business. The ravine was lined with many ideal places for concealment of snipers and the route taken by the venturesome pair along the bottom was an ideal place to get sniped. But Phil and Tim felt that the place ought to be explored, and as a call to summon the other boys of the squad would serve only to alarm any hidden boches in the vicinity, they decided to take the burden of the investigation on their own shoulders.

They advanced a hundred yards into the ravine without seeing another living creature, except a few squirrels and hundreds of birds which chattered and chirped away as if the carnage of a world war was the farthest possible from their thoughts.

The boom of cannon was confined now to distant portions of the indeterminate battle line, and the discharge of smaller firearms also had ceased in the immediate vicinity. It seemed to the two boys that they and the squirrels and the birds had the ravine all to themselves, but they were destined presently to be disillusioned.

Suddenly—of course, for all explosions are sudden,—Phil was startled by the discharge of

two rifles from behind a thicket twenty feet ahead. "Ping!" sung a bullet past his left ear. Tim was not startled. He did not know what hit him. Over he went, and Phil sprang behind a tree, as a true American, to meet the enemy Indian fashion.

CHAPTER VIII

AID FROM THE AIR

A BULLET through his own body would not have given Phil as intense a pain as the one that struck Tim and apparently ended his career. But he was too good a soldier to let even so distressing an incident delay him in the duty of speedy self preservation.

And yet, swift though he was in springing behind a tree and bringing his rifle into position for firing, there were others just as speedy as he. Six men in gray uniforms, but decidedly un-uniform as to size and grace of physique, were standing out in full view with guns leveled at him.

Instinctively Phil's hand moved an inch or two toward his hand-grenade sack. But it stopped almost with the impulse. He had used the last of his grenades half an hour before in the squad's last fight that resulted in the extermination of one of the most obstinate of all the machine gun nests in the woods. How he wished he had been more mindful of his supply while hurling those missiles at the enemy. Two of them, he recalled distinctly,

had gone wide of their marks and represented a sheer waste of powder and shell. Oh, if he had only one of those grenades! With it he could produce such execution in that group of snipers that he could easily capture or finish with his rifle those not slain by the explosion of the hand missile. He was sure he could hurl a grenade accurately and at the same time keep his head and body fairly well protected from the enemy's rifles behind the bole of the tree.

But there was no use now of mourning over spilled milk or exploded shells, and an attempt to engage in battle, alone, with six Hohenzollernites, all of whom had the drop on him, could mean nothing more hopeful than death.

One of the snipers called out an order in German, but Phil did not understand it, although he had studied the language one year at school. Then all six men advanced toward him with their guns ready to fire the instant the Marine showed a disposition to fight.

The boy was on the verge of offering to surrender when a new interruption of proceedings produced one of those spectacular thrills that relieve the carnage of battle of some of its dreadfulness. Almost without warning, save for a heavy, momentary rushing sound in the atmosphere, there was an explosion and up-

heaval of earth midway between the boches and the American Marines.

Phil did not see what occurred. For the moment he could see nothing but confusion. His first thought was that the explosion was caused by a shell from either American or boche artillery. But this could hardly be. He had heard no shrill scream that always heralds the approach of such missiles. Sound travels more rapidly than even a cannon projectile, and soldiers often comment with grim amusement on their acquired skill at "dodging" shells whose approach is announced by their own shrieks piercing the air ahead of them.

Suddenly Phil recalled that, in the midst of the excitement attending his and Tim's excursion into the ravine, he had heard faintly a familiar noise in the upper atmosphere—caused by the powerful gyrations of an aeroplane. As the echoes of the explosion of the shell died away, he heard the super-sonorous buzz of the "great mechanical bee" again and looked upward.

It was a French aeroplane, from which the bomb had fallen. Apparently the flyer had seen the unequal combat going on below and dropped an explosive in the hope of incapacitating the opponents of the boy in khaki to do him any harm. The overhead foliage was not

heavy at this point and it was not inconceivable that the aviator might have seen even more of the activities of the six snipers than Phil and Tim had seen.

None of the advancing enemy was killed, although it seemed well-nigh miraculous that all of them were not at least fatally injured. However, Phil saw two of them picking themselves up after the cloud of flying earth, stones, and sticks had fallen back to earth. Blood was trickling from the face of each of these and all of the others were nursing severe cuts or bruises.

Phil saw his opportunity. Every one of the boches had dropped his gun in order the better to pet his smarting wounds. The boy, protected by the bole of the large tree which he was endeavoring to keep between himself and the enemy's bullets, had not been touched by even the smallest of the flying stones, sticks, bits of earth or pieces of shell. Springing out from behind the tree he ran toward the panic-stricken sextette, with rifle ready to be brought to his shoulder at a moment's warning.

"Halt!" he cried; "Halt, or I'll shoot!"

CHAPTER IX

KILL, KILL, KILL, KILL, KILL, KILL!

WHETHER or not the boches could understand this much, or this little, English was a matter of no importance. They evidently knew what the Marine in khaki meant, and they obeyed, several of them yelling "Kamerad!" in tones of panic.

Phil had not forgotten all his school German vocabulary. The next order that left his lips slipped out with very good Prussian accent:

"Kom her! Hande ueber Kopf."

The now timid Teutons advanced with hands over their heads toward their youthful captor, in strict obedience to the order.

Phil was relieved that his prisoners did not laugh at his German. They came forward with all due respect for the order given—or was it for the bullets in the boy's gun? He did not know. Under ordinary civil circumstances he would have hesitated to engage in conversation with a German in the latter's native tongue for fear lest he show his ignorance of the idioms of the language. "Hande ueber Kopf" was a literal translation of "hands over

(your) head." It might be very good German, and then again it might be very poor.

Relieved at the failure of his prisoners to give him the laugh, he decided to continue to give orders in their language whenever he could recall words that seemed to carry the intended meaning. But he found it difficult sometimes to keep from laughing at himself, for he knew unmistakably that some of the German he was using was at least unique. Still his prisoners regarded him with profound respect—or, again, was it the bullets in his gun?

Phil was puzzled what to do with his prisoners, whose condition of captivity was, after all, rather uncertain. He dared not take his eyes off them for a moment. Possibly some or all of them carried small firearms, which they would bring into action at a moment's opportunity. The boy dared not attempt to search them, nor dared he attempt to march them back through the woods toward the American rear line. They were almost certain, if they carried such weapons, to find an opportunity, by springing behind large trees, to whip out their pistols and turn the tables on him.

There were evidently only three courses open for Phil to pursue. One was to stand where he was, and compel his prisoners to re-

main in their present positions, with hands over their heads until help came. Another was to shoot the six men down in their tracks as rapidly as he was able to discharge his repeater accurately. The other was to turn and flee with all his well practiced fleetness of foot.

The last he could not consider for an instant. The second was contrary to American principles opposed to unnecessary frightfulness in war. The first was impracticable in view of the fact that the sun was setting and darkness would soon cover the ravine.

It occurred to the young sergeant that he might also compel his doubtfully secured captives to divest themselves of their uniforms in order to make certain that they had no concealed firearms, but such a course would not guarantee his ability to prevent them from escaping in the woods after dark. It might, however, be the means eventually of saving his life if the men should escape from him, and Phil decided to adopt it as a precautionary measure.

But at the same time he cast about him in a vague hope that help of some kind might be at hand. He glanced quickly up to see if perchance the French flyer was not about to offer him further assistance, but that very thoughtful air-fighter was now engaged in a skirmish with an enemy plane, which was taking them

farther and farther away from the precarious scene in the ravine. Then the young officer bethought him of his fallen companion, and with almost hysterical hopefulness he cast a quick glance toward the spot where the corporal had dropped without a groan. As he did so, it seemed that he must behold his friend rising on his hands and knees in a determination to lend his much needed assistance.

Phil shuddered as he saw the bullet-headed boy lying as still as any corpse on a battlefield.

"Poor Tim," he muttered. "He was sure he wouldn't be killed. Well, so am I," the doubtful captor of six doubtful prisoners added. "I'm not going to be killed—I *know* it. I'm going to kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, as Tim said I should do. There, I said 'kill' six times. That means that these six prisoners have to die as rapidly as this repeater can repeat. Fortunately, I'm a sharpshooter and can do the job before the last one of them can much more than shudder and look pale. Well, here goes, converting my army rifle into a machine gun."

CHAPTER X

A NOVEL DISARMAMENT

"NO, I can't do it. I'm no Hun."

That sentiment, which flashed revulsively through Phil's brain, probably saved the lives of those six boches, but it also must be held responsible for certain subsequent misfortunes and hardships that rendered Sergeant Speed's army experiences worthy of a many-chaptered record. Meanwhile there was nothing in the boy's manner or actions that indicated what was going on in his mind. None of them knew how narrowly they escaped execution at the hands of a "firing squad of one."

Phil's next order to his captives was such a mongrel admixture of English, poor French and worse German that he has asked that it be not recorded against him. But it was thoroughly understood, being in several short sentences intended to carry something of an explanation of his purpose, and was obeyed.

One of the men with hands over their heads was directed to step forward and remove his "roch und beinkleider." This he did expeditiously, having a great respect for the khaki boy's gun, and presently appeared in the very

amusing combination of—beginning at the feet, surveying upward—a pair of coarse heavy shoes, a suit of union underwear and a steel helmet.

It had occurred to Phil several times since the dropping of the bomb from the aeroplane that he could best serve his own interests in the present predicament by sending forth the call agreed upon for reassembling the members of his squad, except for one grave possibility. The sounding of such a call might be taken by his six prisoners as indicating panic on his part and serve as a signal for a desperate move by them. He decided, therefore, to make certain that they were stripped of all firearms, before issuing any such summons.

So he continued the de-uniforming program already begun, and soon six much humiliated boches stood before him in "union-suit uniforms," the "complexion" of which indicated that the laundry business was not thriving among the minions of the war lords of central Europe.

Then Phil ordered his prisoners to move a considerable distance away from the litter of uniforms strewn over the ground. When he was satisfied as to their position and arrangement, he issued a few more orders with his ingenious, but hardly idiomatic adaptation of

first-year school German, which were obeyed with as much respect as if delivered by a Heidelberg graduate with military authority.

The prisoners, who no longer were required to keep their hands over their heads, were standing near the apparently lifeless form of Corporal Tim; and Phil now, with the aid of expressive motions of his hands and nodding of his head, communicated to them that he desired an examination made of his friend to determine if he were yet alive. The officer in charge, a fellow of surprisingly large girth for a soldier, and another boche of ungainly physique complied with apparent alacrity, and after a seemingly diligent inspection straightened up with looks of sadness on their faces that would have been comical indeed if it had not been for the seriousness of the situation. With voluble expressions of condolence and deprecating shrugs of their shoulders, they gave the young American soldier to understand that they regretted profoundly that his companion lying on the ground was dead.

"You're a pretty pair of liars," Phil said to them with a "happy scowl." He made no effort, however, to express himself in German, for his utterance was intended more as an outburst of feeling than a communication. "That boy is alive, or I don't know anything about

the early stiffening of a corpse. When you lifted that body up it hung as limp and limber as a wet rag."

Whether any of the six captives understood what Sergeant Phil said could not be determined from the expression, or lack of expression, on their faces. However, that question mattered little to Phil now. He must do something quickly to secure his prisoners against escape and also to effect freedom for himself, in order that he might render much needed first aid to his unconscious friend.

In his early school days, Phil had been the envy of all his boy friends because of one achievement that every boy longs to attain. He could pucker his tongue against his teeth and expel a gust of breath through the straitened avenue thus formed in such manner as to vie in shrillness a miniature fire alarm siren. He was not much good at whistling a tune, but he surely could wake the echoes with a piercing air blast through his teeth, and this he proceeded now to do.

It was his agreed signal to the other members of his squad to assemble and it surely startled the six boches, as was evident from the fact that their faces no longer were expressionless. There was no doubt in the boy's mind now that their minds had been secretly busy

over something that they did not wish communicated to him and that his shrill signal was not in the least pleasing to them.

However, although Phil never had all the facts and circumstances before him to aid him in determining the truth, he is of the opinion now that his call was the one thing needed by his prisoners to bring about the very result for which they longed most deeply. But the startled look on their faces indicated that they did not know it.

Phil waited a minute for an answer from other members of his squad, but received none. Then he was about to repeat the call, when something occurred that rendered another shrill whistle through his teeth virtually impossible.

Suddenly a heavy weight landed on him from behind. A pair of powerful arms were thrown about his neck, and he was borne to the ground by the impetus of the onset.

CHAPTER XI

PHIL A PRISONER

ALTHOUGH this overpowering attack from behind was doubtless almost as much a surprise to Phil's six prisoners as it was to the boy himself, it did not take them long to recover and seize advantage of the situation. Like a football team they rushed forward to tackle their recent captor, but their assistance was scarcely needed, for the fellow who had leaped on Phil's back was a powerful 200-pounder, and the shock that resulted when earth and the boy came together half stunned the latter.

But it was not enough to deprive him entirely of his senses, and as he was being jerked to his feet, he had the hazy gratification of hearing an answering whistle to his own "siren shriek." The boches evidently were alarmed by the same sound, for they put greater energy and speed in their actions in order to get out of the ravine as soon as possible.

First they raced about and gathered up their guns, which lay strewn around the crater-like hole made by the explosion of the bomb dropped from the aeroplane. Then they gath-

ered up their uniforms, but did not stop to put them on, and darted into the thick of the timber in the direction of the retreating boche lines, two of them half carrying, half dragging their boy prisoner between them.

But Phil was not the kind of lad who would attempt to hinder the progress of his captors by hanging back and pretending to be unable to keep pace with them. He preferred to conduct himself as thoroughly able-bodied as soon as he had recovered from the shock that attended his capture. In a few minutes he won just a slight manifestation of good-will from the two who had hold of his arms by "going them one better" and actually leading them slightly in the race through the timber.

In a short time the dusk was so heavy in the woods that it was difficult for them to make progress at more than a slow walk. Efforts to push ahead rapidly were sure to result in trouble with tripping underbrush, scratching branches, and bruising boles of trees.

Phil realized that it was next to vain to hope that they would be overtaken by the comrade Marines of his squad; for although answering calls from them had reached his ears, indicating that they had almost arrived at the scene of his capture, there was small likelihood, indeed, that they would be able to hit the trail

of the fleeing boches and overtake them and rescue him. He was tempted several times to repeat his whistle and yell out information as to his predicament, but vicious threats from the officer of big girth in charge of the squad now in "underclothing uniform," accompanied by a significant pressing of a rifle muzzle now and then against his head, advised him convincingly against any such proceeding.

Sergeant Speed's one hope of rescue was that they might run into a body of Americans who had advanced farther into the timber in their search for retreating snipers and machine gunners. But this hope was only remotely reasonable, for the instruction from the commanding officer had been that the entire raiding force return by nightfall. Undoubtedly he and Corporal Tim, and perhaps the other members of the squad as well, were being reckoned among the missing. It was hardly probable that the latter had yet given up their efforts to rejoin him after hearing and answering his siren whistle. Possibly they had discovered Tim lying on the ground and even now were doing their best to revive him or were bearing him back toward the American lines.

Phil and his captors had by this time advanced some distance into this wooded battle

ground, most of which had until recently been occupied by the enemy. But the heavy shell fire and attacks by the air fleet of the allies had driven the main boche division back a considerable distance, and after the Marines had routed out the nests of machine guns and sharpshooters that were concealed in the woods and rendered perilous any further attempt on the part of the enemy to hold these positions, the captured timber terrain was a desolate waste indeed.

No doubt there would be no attempt on the part of the Marines to move much farther toward the enemy's lines that night. In the morning probably the commanding officer would order another advance unless the enemy anticipated him with a counter attack.

The effects of the shelling of the woods by the American artillery was evident to some extent almost to the very front of the boche new positions. In spite of the darkness, Phil could see with the aid of the stars that peeped down through the foliage, torn, twisted and splintered branches and tree trunks, while every now and then they stumbled into or narrowly avoided a jagged shell-hole in the ground.

But at last they reached the objective of the young non-com's captors, which was a position of safety behind their own lines, and

Phil found himself confronted with the prospect of remaining a prisoner in the hands of the enemy for the duration of the rest of the war.

CHAPTER XII

A BARBED WIRE PRISON

A SHORT distance out in No Man's Land from the German lines, Phil's captors stopped long enough to put on their outer clothing and thus cover the comical evidence of their humiliation by the young American who subsequently became their prisoner only through a surprise rear attack. Doubtless they had not stopped sooner for this purpose because they feared the possible consequences of any delay, with a swarm of Yankee "devil dogs" scouring the timber for boches.

Phil was rushed to the rear where he was placed under guard with a dozen other American prisoners who had been brought in from various quarters. Half an hour later, it appearing that no more prisoners would be brought in that night, they were hustled back several miles over a rough road to a physically wrecked village, deserted by its civilian population, and there corralled in a barbed wire inclosure already occupied by more than 200 captured Americans and Frenchmen. There each prisoner was stripped of his helmet and

every other superfluous article of use or treasure.

It was a wretched place, from all dim appearances in the darkness. There was not a glimmer of light within the barbed-wire prison, and only a few outside. The patrol of guards that paced about outside the inclosure were ghostly looking shadows against the various background of empty darkness or debris of shell-shattered buildings. The other prisoners did not pay much attention as the newly captured Marines were driven into the place like so many cattle. This apparent indifference doubtless was due to the darkness of the night and the weariness of all the prisoners.

The young Marine sergeant at once sought a resting place for the night. He knew better than to expect any courtesies in the way of food, water, or couch for the night from men of the brutal type that characterized most of the boches with whom he had come into contact thus far.

Phil was tired and fell asleep "as soon as his head touched his pillow," which consisted of his arm curled up under his head. Later when this became uncomfortable for the "pillow," he rolled over in his sleep, and his only headrest was the uncushioned earth.

The boy awoke at sunup and looked around

him with a kind of eager curiosity, rendered possible by his refreshed condition following a very good night's rest. A soldier does not need a hair mattress to insure slumber in comfort. Sometimes he would be thankful for a dry six feet of earth on which to rest his weary form. Phil congratulated himself as he lay down to sleep on his first night as a prisoner of war not only that he had a dry resting place in the open air, but that the weather was warm.

About two-thirds of the prisoners in this inclosure were French, as nearly as Phil was able to estimate after the dawn of day rendered it possible for him to get a clear view of his surroundings. The invading army had selected what appeared to have been a small village park and fenced it in with barbed wire stapled to the rows of trees that marked the marginal border line. The young Marine "non-com" soon picked out the "colony" of Americans in the place and discovered among them two young fellows, Dan Fentress and Emmet Harding, whose acquaintance he had made at the last billeting place before the Yanks were given the Belleau and Bouresches sector. The three were soon engaged in an animated conversation on the events of the last few days. All expressed themselves as deeply disappointed because it appeared probable that

they had struck their last blow for world freedom and must in all probability labor as slaves for the mailed-fisted kaiserites until their more fortunate fellow crusaders drove home the last blow which would make the entire Hohenzollern host throw up their hands and yell "Kamerad!"

"What makes me sorest in my hardest-to-hurt spot," said Dan, grinding his teeth with impotent rage, "is the fact that I can't go back home and say that I know I killed a Hun. Not that I wanted to brag about it. I might not even tell anybody about it if I had shot holes through a dozen slayers of women and children. But I'd just like to be able to say I'd made a record to be proud of and—and—then—keep the secret to myself if I liked modesty as well as I'd like real American roast beef in a Hun prison camp."

"Maybe you're just playing modest now," suggested Emmet Harding with a shrewd smile. "Maybe you've actually wiped out a score of Huns and are just practicing, to feel how it seems to deny you're a hero."

"No, I don't believe he's doing any such thing," interposed Phil almost eagerly. "At least I hope he isn't, for I want company right now. I'm in the same boat he says he's in. I don't know that I've even smashed a cootie on

a Hun's hide, although I had a chance to shoot down half-a-dozen apostles of frightfulness like so many ten-pins, but didn't do it; and that, very probably, is the reason I'm here now."

"What!" exclaimed Dan in tones of contemptuous astonishment. "What sort of animal are you—a pacifist? You'd better keep that story under your hat when you get back home."

"I don't know whether I'll be able to," Phil returned with a forlorn smile. "You see, there's no person I'd rather tell a joke on than myself, and this is surely a joke on me. At first it looked like a joke on the Huns—"

"Whoever heard of turning the biggest and most bloody war this world has ever known into humor?" Dan interrupted almost angrily.

"I respect your impatience under the circumstances," Phil returned quietly. "But hear me through before you judge me too harshly. I'm the sort of fellow that wouldn't be guilty of a Lusitania sinking or of a violation of a Belgian treaty. Neither would I shoot enemy soldiers after they've thrown up their hands."

"Did those six Huns throw up their hands?"

"Yes."

"And you had a gun pointed at them?"

"Yes."

"And did they yell 'Kamerad?' "

"Yes."

"I thought so. You're a fool. But where's the humor in that situation?"

"The first joke, I suppose, came when I ordered them to strip off their uniforms one after another and had them standing before me in brogans, underwear and steel helmets."

"A comical sight, indeed," declared Phil's critic sarcastically. "But what did you do that for?"

"To be sure they had no firearms on their person," interposed Emmet.

"Well, what did you mean to do after that?" inquired Dan as Phil nodded assent to Emmet's interpretation.

"March them back to our lines."

"And why didn't you?"

"You're admitting by your line of questions now that there may have been a little intelligence in my method," Phil observed as a prelude to his answer.

"Intelligent enough if you had succeeded," retorted Dan grimly.

"I get your argument and am inclined to agree with you in a way," the severely grilled Marine returned. "Well, I'm going to tell you why I didn't take my prisoners back to our

lines in triumph. A 200-pound boche sneaked up from behind and jumped on my back and—"

"That's enough; you got what was coming to you," declared Dan with a finality of opinion that admitted of no further discussion. "If you care for my judgment in the matter, I'll say it's up to you to use your wits as you never used 'em before and whip the kaiser internally in order to retrieve your honor. Get me? You're on the inside now and you must do something to help win the war from this side of the boche lines. But here's the call to breakfast and some guards coming this way. Methinks they're curious to know what's the nature of this warm discussion of ours. Everybody shut up and look hungry—for something a dog can hardly eat."

CHAPTER XIII

MR. BOACONSTRICTOR

"SOMETHING we can hardly swallow" proved to be a true characterization of the meat-and-vegetable stew that was served to the prisoners in tin bowls, which looked as if they had seen service in the Franco-Prussian war. The meat was in small bits, which were few in number and so tough or gristly as to be hardly edible. The vegetables were principally potatoes and onions. This combination would have been fairly well calculated to sustain life if it had been well seasoned and if it had not tasted and smelled as if it had been warmed several times over a low fire insufficient to bring it to the boiling point. A piece of stale brown bread was served to each prisoner with this stew.

In order to prevent any of the prisoners from getting double portions of this mess, the men were lined up next to the barbed-wire fence, along which several boys and men, the latter too old for military service, passed, carrying kettles of stew and buckets of sliced bread and handing out dippersful and slices through the

fence to the hungry Americans and Frenchmen.

Meanwhile two guards, also of the superannuated post-military class entered the inclosure and advanced to the spot where the animated discussion was going on among the three comrade Marines. The latter, as has been observed, noticed their approach and so camouflaged their further words and actions that the evident suspicion of the guards was effectually dispelled.

There was a good deal of comment among the prisoners concerning the quality of food served to them and other conveniences—or inconveniences—with which they were provided. The general opinion among them was that the enemy was approaching dangerously near the limit of their resources, which might mean an ending of the war in the not far distant future. Indeed, Phil was sure that he could detect signs of spitefulness in the manner and actions of both commissioned officers and non-coms toward the prisoners, and he was equally certain that the reason for this spitefulness was an undisguisable consciousness of their shortage of resources and equipment.

"This war isn't going to last very much longer," Phil remarked to his two friends as he forced down the last spoonful of stew. He

was ravenously hungry, having had nothing to eat since early the preceding day, and in spite of the fact that the food served was most unpalatable, he deemed it wise not to waste any of the scanty portion served to him.

"That's what lots of soldiers are saying principally because of stories of experiences similar to ours that find their way across No Man's Land," said Dan. "But there's one thing that gets me in this connection more than anything else, and that is that the more defeat you cram down these boches' throats, the more arrogant and overbearing they become. Just look at that human boaconstrictor strutting around as if utterly unconscious of the fact that he ought to be going to sleep."

"I don't get you," said Emmet with an expression of challenging curiosity. "If we were campaigning with the British among the pyramids of Egypt, it might be appropriate for you to talk like a Sphinx."

"I get him," announced Phil. "He means that boche officer has such an ungainly girth that he looks like a boa that has swallowed a pig and ought to be taking an after-dinner nap. But I have something to add to Dan's observation. That fellow is one of the six kaiserites whom I forced to strip to their underclothes and who turned the tables on me and re-

captured their pants et cetera, and brought me here as an honored guest."

"Better keep out of his sight then," Emmet advised. "If he sets eyes on you, he's likely not to rest until he gets his revenge. And you know what revenge means in wartime. He'll probably find some way of blowin' you to atoms to feed the molecules."

"You do him too great a chemical honor by presenting the matter in such light," Phil objected, screwing up one side of his face to indicate his skepticism. "He looks to me like an ordinary butcher, and I don't think he'd attempt to do anything more than make mincemeat of me."

"Have it your own way," Emmet returned with a shrug. "But look out for him at any event. He seems to be recognized as having a good deal of authority around here."

"He's only a second lieutenant," was Phil's reminder.

"That doesn't make any difference," Emmet insisted. "This fellow's in right with the higher-ups. It may be easier, you know, to use an officer of low rank for all sorts of jobs than one of higher rank. He can work more quietly—won't attract so much attention sometimes."

Phil decided to take his companion's advice,

and keep as much in the background as possible in order that "Mr. Boaconstrictor" might not fall into revengeful temptation at the sight of him. And before long he was congratulating himself on this decision. Half an hour after the early "feed," as he was pleased to designate the morning stew and bread, the order was given for everybody in the inclosure to get ready to move. This was succeeded by another order ten minutes later for all to file out through the gate and follow two soldiers who would lead the way.

Mechanically Phil glanced toward the two soldiers referred to by the prison guard who made the announcement. Dan and Emmet, who were still near him, did likewise.

"It seems impossible for you to shake your friend, Boche Boa," observed Emmet. "He's going to be one of the leaders of the grand march to some munitions factory, where, undoubtedly, we will be set at work making big shells to shoot at the Allies."

"Let's hang back and fall in at the rear end of the line of march," Dan suggested. "He may have forgotten all about his experience with Phil, and the sight of the fellow who dragged his dignity in the dust may make him show his fangs."

This seemed to be good advice, and was fol-

lowed as nearly as possible, although they were forced into the line several paces ahead of the rear end by the guards who herded the prisoners out of the inclosure without regard for the wish or convenience of anybody.

CHAPTER XIV

A NEW PRISON

THERE were few incidents of special interest during the first day of the march of these 250 prisoners toward the German border. Of course to persons unaccustomed to the sights and scenes in the blasted war zone, everything along the route must have been interesting. But to these men of several months' experience, a landscape of unmarred beauty and order must have been a novelty worthy of observation.

Every town, village or hamlet that they passed through was partly or completely wrecked by shell explosions or fire. Most of the French inhabitants had fled, although here and there were a few who had been caught in the advancing wave of the invading army. Much of the open country was disfigured with shell holes and trenches, and many of the farm houses had been converted, wantonly it appeared, into heaps of charred woodwork, black masonry and ashes.

An hour before the dusk of evening they arrived at a small town that was in better con-

dition of physical preservation than any of the others they had passed through. Apparently it was used as a sort of way-station in the line of communications between the fighting front and the Rhine frontier.

There was no barbed-wire inclosure for keeping the prisoners over night in this place, and so they were housed in buildings that showed no serious effects of recent bombardment. Phil and his two friends managed to keep close together during the march and were much gratified with the result of their efforts when they found themselves lodged in the same building for the night. They were given their unvarying breakfast-dinner-supper stew and stale bread shortly before dusk and then, together with a dozen others, were locked in a small house that undoubtedly, before the last big drive of the enemy, had been occupied by a French family of not more than three or four.

The house was bare. Every article of furniture had been removed. Not even a lamp with which to dispel the gloom of the place was to be found.

"There isn't a bit of ventilation in this house," declared one of the prisoners, whose name, it soon developed, was Arthur Evans.

"And we don't dare try to open a window for fear one of the guards may try his marks-

manship at us," said another who had been addressed in Phil's hearing as Jerry Carey.

"It's almost as big a menace as being gassed," muttered another Marine, who answered to the name of Burns.

"I don't suppose we fifteen men would exactly die in these tightly closed rooms in one night," said Phil meditatively; "but I'm afraid we'd almost have to be carried out by morning. We'd better get our wits together and contrive some kind of vent that will make possible a current of air up through the chimney."

"I'm in favor of smashing one of the windows with a shoe," Burns announced. "We can all drop down flat on the floor and escape a volley from the guards if they fire in here."

"Let's try something else," Phil proposed. "Here's a trapdoor. Maybe it opens into a basement or cellar. Let's see if we can't get some air through that."

There was no ring or handle of any kind with which to lift the door. So Phil hunted around until he found a small stick with which he was able to get a slight purchase and lifted the door until he was able to get hold of it with his fingers. A moment later the entire group of prisoners were gazing down into a dark hole

in which the only visible object was the upper part of a rude flight of steps.

"There's no air in that place," declared one of the Marines, sniffing in disgust at the scent of mold and must of the atmosphere in the cellar.

"I wish I had a light and I'd go down and explore it," said Phil. "Who knows what we might find in it?"

"Some rotten apples and potatoes and a lot of mice and vermin, more'n likely," prophesied Dan Fentress pessimistically.

"Oh, I agree with you there, and I agree also that it is hardly probable that I'd find anything worth while," Phil replied. "Still, just to be doing something, I'd like to explore that hole in the ground. Remember, fellows, this is pretty nearly on the other side of the world from where we live. Consequently, everything we see and hear around, about, within and among these our approximate antipodes ought to interest us."

"Nobody could say you nay after such poetic persuasion as that," avowed one of the imprisoned Marines who thus far had been conspicuous principally because of his silence.

"I left a hard-headed friend unconscious back in Belleau Woods yesterday who had no use for poets in war," Phil returned quickly.

"He regarded them as worse than enemy spies, and I don't know but that I agree with him. So, you see, you haven't complimented me very much."

"There seems to be a little light down there," said Evans, who had been peering into the cellarway while the others were engaged in what he regarded as profitless palaver. "There must be a window in the cellar wall, and as it isn't dark yet, probably a wee bit of daylight is filtering through."

"I'm going down and feel about with my hands," Phil announced, placing one foot on the top step. "If there's any light at all down there, I'll get the benefit of it after my eyes have got accustomed to conditions. So here's hoping that I'll find something of more value than rotten apples."

"I hope you'll find a keg o' cider," said Evans, smacking his lips.

Phil had descended no more than half a dozen steps when he stopped with a low exclamation of interest.

"What's up?" asked Emmet Harding.

"There's a shelf here right beside the stairway and several things on it. I'll hand them up to you, and you see what they are."

The first article that Phil laid his hands on was a short housewife's paring knife. As he

had been deprived of his own jackknife when searched behind the boche lines, he decided to appropriate this valuable kitchen tool to his own use and put it into a pocket of his coat. The next was a small wooden box, which the finder passed up to one of the fellows who reached down to receive it.

"Candles!" announced the latter eagerly, for there was no lid on it and the contents were plainly visible in the twilight.

"You don't say!" exclaimed Phil, returning to the top of the stairway eagerly.

"You bet I do," answered the other, holding up one of the sticks of molded wax. "There must be a dozen here."

"What good will they do unless somebody has a match?" inquired Evans skeptically. "I bet there isn't a match in this crowd."

A hurried search by everybody present confirmed this bit of pessimism.

"Never mind," said Phil quietly; "I'm going to light one of those candles without a match."

CHAPTER XV

A LIGHT WITHOUT MATCHES

PHIL'S proposition to light without a match one of the candles discovered in the cellarway of the probable former residence of a family of French refugees interested every one of his imprisoned companions. None of them was incredulous. All were sufficiently experienced in human resourcefulness to give attention to even a seemingly impossible scheme when it came from an intelligent young man under circumstances of urgent necessity. Indeed, one of them, suspecting at once the nature of Sergeant Speed's plan, inquired quickly:

"How are you going to do it—rub sticks?"

"You've hit it about right," answered Phil. "But it's getting dark, and we've got to hustle if we're going to be able to do anything. Any of you fellows got a knife?"

There was not a pocketknife among them. All had been thoroughly searched after being brought back behind the enemy lines.

"Well, never mind," said Phil. "I found a strong paring knife in the cellarway and it seems to be pretty sharp. Now, here is what I want: Several of you fellows hunt about over

the floor and woodwork and see if you can find a loose board. If you can get hold of a loose end of a board rip it up."

"You don't need to rip up any boards," called out one of the fellows from an adjoining room. "Here's half a dozen short pieces—probably meant as kindling for the fireplace."

"Good!" exclaimed the volunteer fire-maker. "Bring them here near the window."

The comrade did as requested. A few moments later Phil had selected one of the short boards and split it on his knee.

"I'm going to make a bow out of this," he announced, as he began to whittle. "Some of you fellows take these shavings and shred them against something. I'll need some punk to catch the sparks in."

"There's a brick fireplace in the next room," said Dan. "Some of the bricks are loose and we can pull out a couple and shred the whittlings between them."

"Good again," pronounced the leader of the enterprise. "Now one of you can help a whole lot by tying two or three shoestrings together for a string of the bow I am preparing. Make the knots as small as you can."

"That isn't necessary," a young fellow named Barber interposed. "I have a stout cord five or six feet long that will suit your purpose

fine. I picked it up in camp a few days ago and put it in my pocket, thinking it might come handy sometime."

Phil received the string offered to him by the last speaker, and then offered this suggestion by way of general advice on an important subject:

"We ought to be careful not to pitch our voices too loud. Of course there's nothing in what has been said that could do us any particular harm if it had been overheard by one of the guards. Still, there's no telling when we'll discover something or concoct a scheme that it would be advisable to keep to ourselves. We'd better tone our voices down so that we have to lean forward to hear each other; then we'll be on the safe side."

Several of the prisoners expressed their approval of this suggestion, and the succeeding conversations were in lower tones.

The work progressed rapidly, considering the insufficiency of light in the house. In a remarkably short time Phil and his assistants had produced a rude bow two-and-a-half feet long, a fireboard with a small cone-shaped drill-socket, or pit, in one side, and a V-shaped trough leading from the pit to the edge of the board; a "thunder-bird," or small block of wood with a cone-shaped socket in the center;

a drill, or a rounded piece of wood about fifteen inches long and sharpened at both ends; and a handful of shredded shavings.

"There!" exclaimed Phil in subdued tone, as he surveyed the completed task in the dusk now so heavy that he was sure the work could not have progressed successfully many minutes longer. "I'm glad that's done. By the way, it's fortunate that there are curtain shades still on the windows. Let's pull them down and then light one of the candles. We can shade the light with our bodies so that there won't be much danger of its being seen outside. Be careful not to let the guards see you pulling the shades down. It's so dark now that they won't notice what we've done after they're down."

The shades were drawn down cautiously, and fourteen Marine prisoners of war gathered around Phil to watch the hoped-for success of making fire in the Old World after the manner developed and perfected by the aborigines of the New.

But they did little actual watching before the first spark appeared. Immediately after the drawing of the shades there was scarcely a glimmer of light in the room, and Phil had to depend on his sense of feeling to enable him to operate his fire-making contrivance.

"Now, all of you crowd around in as close a circle as you can without hindering my movements," he directed as he fitted the sharpened ends of the drill into the pit of the fire-board, which he had laid on the floor, and the pit of the "thunder-bird," which he held in his left hand. Then he began a sawing motion with the bow, the string of which was looped around the drill.

A moment later all were listening eagerly to the merry hum of the drill as it whirled around in its perpendicular position, the revolving motion being produced by the drawing back and forth of the bow string looped about it.

"Keep close together," Phil warned. "Don't let any light get through. It's coming. Smell the burning of the wood?"

Suddenly there was a tiny glow at the base of the drill.

"Quick with the punk," said Phil eagerly.

Nobody could see the move, but nevertheless Dan dropped a pinch of the dry shredded wood on the tiny brilliance.

The bright spot grew larger, the drill whirled more rapidly, a few more pinches of punk were applied, and the glow burst into a flame.

"Now, the candle," Phil directed, but even as he spoke the wick of one of the illuminants was being applied to the burning punk.

Phil seized the lighted candle and started for the open trapdoorway.

"I'm going downstairs and see what I can find," he announced, holding his coat lapel over the flame. "All of you stand close together and help keep any rays of this candle from getting to any of the windows."

"How about the basement windows?" asked one of the men. "How're you going to keep the light from shining through them?"

"I'll have to run a little risk on that account," Phil replied; "but I'll shield the light all I can with my coat and when I get down there I'll set it in a corner where it can't be seen through the window or windows, if possible."

The boy descended slowly, and the others, or such of them as could obtain a view at once through the opening in the floor, gazed eagerly after him. They were unable to see much, however, for he covered the light with the lapel of his coat so carefully that the entire illumination fell directly in front of him.

Phil's first trip into the cellar was a short one. In less than five minutes he returned to the head of the stairs without the light and offered this startling announcement in low but clear tones:

"Fellows, I've made a great discovery. If you're game, there's a good chance for us to escape."

CHAPTER XVI

PLANS FOR ESCAPE

EVERYBODY was eager to hear of Phil's discovery, and a chorus of low-toned demands for an explanation followed his announcement.

"It isn't a very romantic discovery," the explorer of the cellar replied. "In fact, it's very ordinary and points toward some hard work for us."

"We're used to that," returned one of the prisoners quickly. "Out with it. Don't keep us guessing."

"There's a regular outfit of excavating tools down there," the boy sergeant explained. "They were concealed behind some boxes, and I suppose that's the reason the boche invaders never found them. There's a spade, shovel, pick and hoe there—all in good condition."

"Do you mean to suggest that we dig our way out of this place?" asked Phil's last inquisitor.

"Sure—why not?" was the reply.

"We'd have to tunnel out—clear to the other side of their outposts."

"And that's just what I propose to do," said Phil deliberately.

There being no light in the room, nobody could see anybody else's expression of countenance, but the chilly silence that followed this announcement indicated something of what was going on in the minds of those who heard it. One of the latter whispered into another's ear:

"He's gone clean daft—insane. We'd better amuse him."

But Phil's sharp ear caught enough of these words to enable him to understand their purport. He realized, too, that it was a very natural conclusion, although he had not intended to provoke it. Any such self-amusement as this would have been exceedingly out of place. Still, he was tempted just a little to see if someone of his prison-associates would perceive the feasibility of his plan. None of them did, however, until he supplemented his last assertion, as follows:

"It isn't so crazy an idea after all, when you consider that we have only about fifteen feet to dig."

"By crackey, that's so!" exclaimed Dan Fentress excitedly. Then moderating his tone of voice in mindfulness of their recent agreement on the subject, he added: "Didn't you

fellows notice that there's an old stonequarry or something of the kind just south o' this house? We can dig right into that and slip down and away. It's hardly likely we'll find anybody watching from that quarter."

"That's a brilliant idea, and we're a lot o' mutts for not getting it sooner," Evans declared. "Let's get busy at once."

"There's just one window in the basement wall, and that's on the south side," Phil continued. "We'll have to blind that up some way before we do much work. Probably there's nobody watching on that side, but we don't want to run any risk."

"We'll take off our coats and jam 'em up in the window if the frame is deep enough," Emmet Harding proposed. "Is it?" he inquired, addressing Phil.

"Yes, it's six or eight inches deep," the latter replied. "I propped the candle up with several brickbats on the floor a few feet from the window. Nobody'd be likely to see a light from that side unless he were inspecting very closely for one."

"Let's go down and begin work at once," Evans proposed. "The sooner we get away the better our chances of escape will be."

"We'll need about eight or ten coats to blind the window with," said Phil. "Here's mine.

Some of you pass over yours and I'll go down and take care of that matter."

A minute later the prison tunnel engineer had as big a load of coats on his arm as he wished to carry while descending into the cellar, and he was about to return below when Dan startled him a little by saying:

"We haven't got the ventilation yet that we started out to get. And this place is growing stuffy already. How about it? We can't work very long in such atmosphere as this, and the worst of it will settle into the cellar, where we'll have to do all our hard work."

"That's so," said Phil. "We can't open that cellar window any easier probably than one of the windows up here, and if we could, we wouldn't dare use it for ventilating while working down there with a light. Let's go around and try the windows up here and see if we can't get one of them open without making any noise."

"Let's try to open one on the north side," Emmet suggested. "If the guards hear us, we'll explain that we've got to have some fresh air. Then, too, they'll probably watch that end of the house more closely and maybe neglect the south end if they know one of the north windows is open."

This plan was adopted and Emmet was dele-

gated to try the north windows. The general suspense was greatly relieved when he turned and whispered that he had raised the lower sash of the first window he tried and propped it up with a short piece of board. He had not made a sound audible to his companions while doing this.

"Now, nobody must talk above a whisper, and that as little as possible, while the window is open," he cautioned.

Phil took this as a cue for him to descend into the cellar and blind the foundation window with his load of coats. In a few minutes, after accomplishing this, he returned and selected two aids, with whom he went below again to begin work on the proposed escape tunnel into the excavation to the south.

CHAPTER XVII

TUNNELING

"WE'LL have to conserve our candles," was Phil's first remark after he and his two assistants, Dan Fentress and Donald Winslow, reached the foot of the stairway. "I haven't any candlestick yet, but we can make one with some stiff clay as soon as we get to digging."

"What kind of masonwork do we have to cut through?" asked Dan, stepping over to the south wall and proceeding to find an answer to the question for himself.

"It's brick and cement," Phil replied, anticipating the questioner's move to answer himself. "Ordinarily it would be difficult to break even with a crowbar and a sledge hammer; but observe that large frost-crack running down from one corner of the window. Several of the bricks there are almost loose. We can start a hole in the wall by picking out those bricks. Then the work of enlarging the opening ought to be comparatively easy with the aid of this pick."

As he spoke Phil took up the tool referred

to, which he had stood up against the wall, together with the spade, shovel and hoe discovered by him on his first inspection of the cellar. It was by no means a delicate looking pick, and all three of the Marines who examined it agreed that it ought to withstand an extremely heavy leverage in the work before them.

"I figure that the man who lived here worked in that quarry, and that is the explanation of these tools," Phil continued after his companions had examined the articles in question and satisfied themselves as to their serviceability.

"They are not exactly stonequarry tools, or at least they constitute a decidedly incomplete kit," Dan remarked critically. "This isn't much more than an ordinary garden outfit."

"Well, anyway, they're here for us to use," Winslow put in; "so let's get busy, for this candle is nearly half gone already, and we're liable to run out of light if we don't hustle. Here goes for a starter."

He seized the pick and was about to transform his manifestation of energy into action, when Phil stayed him with this caution:

"Be careful, Winslow; no hard blows. Remember, there are guards within a few rods of this house, and any noises, even though they are muffled by cellar walls and masses of earth, are pretty certain to be investigated."

"Very wisely said," returned the young Marine with the pick. "I'm altogether too impulsive for a general. That's the reason I'm a private and always will be. What shall I do, sergeant, begin a toothpick operation on the wall?"

"Yes, something o' the sort," Phil replied, smiling. "Jab the pick into that crack there and see if you can't pry some of those bricks loose."

Winslow did as directed, and was astonished on discovering with what ease half a dozen of the bricks came out.

"Fine!" exclaimed Phil gleefully. "Now, try some of that solid wall."

Winslow did as directed. He was a powerful fellow—Phil had selected him as an aid for this reason. The pick stood the test and the wall fell away in bits. In less than an hour—estimated—a section of the wall three feet wide and nearly six feet high had been broken away, and the first candle was still burning.

"Everything's going great," said the young engineer of the enterprise. "The candles are going to last longer than I thought."

"Shan't we light two of them?" Dan suggested. "We can work faster, maybe."

"No, not yet," Sergeant Speed replied quickly. "We'll have two or three of them

going after we get the tunnel started a few feet."

"Stick 'em on our hats?" inquired Winslow.

"No, we haven't any way that I know of to fasten them to our hats. We'll cut niches in the wall and set the candles in there. By the way, I'm going upstairs and get a couple more fellows down here to help."

"We'll have to have some fresh air before long," said Dan. "First thing we know we'll be asphyxiated—carbon-dioxidized, as it were. That fresh air upstairs won't come down here unless forced down with a fan, or we manage to effect some kind of open-air vent through these walls."

"I've been thinking of that," said Phil; "and I have a scheme that I think will work first rate. After we get ahead with the tunnel a few feet, we'll cut a hole straight up to the surface next to the foundation. We'll keep the lights away from that hole, and stop our talking, too."

Phil now left his two companions hard at work and ascended the stairway to report progress to his waiting companions and select two or three more assistants to help speed up the work in the cellar.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PRISONERS TAKE A PRISONER

THE work of digging the tunnel progressed rapidly. At first Phil feared that the job would prove exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, of performance in the seven or eight hours they had before them for labor before the next daybreak. He based this fear on the proximity of the supposed stonequarry just south of the house.

The earth was not even solidly packed at every place where they struck with spade, shovel and pick. In fact, much of it was so loose that to use the pick would have been a waste of time. Generally the spade served the purpose best in the tunnel, the one who wielded that tool pitching the diggings back as far as he could, while others threw or dragged them still farther back against the opposite wall with the shovel and hoe.

Before long it became evident to all the workers why the earth was so easy to spade. There was considerable sand mixed with the clay and the loam constituting the earth's crust at this point. They concluded, therefore, that the stonequarry must be of the sand variety, and

that the rocky substratum in this section of the country was covered with a sandy admixture of supersoil.

But they struck so much of this loosening element that it presently began to appear as a menace rather than an advantage. If a vein of sand should be struck overhead or in the upper part of the excavation, a cave-in might result in the suffocation of the tunneler before he could be rescued. Phil then suggested that thereafter the continuation of the tunnel be elevated a foot or two in order to lessen the possibility of such disaster. However, they were careful also not to cut too close to the surface of the ground for fear lest a guard, passing that way, might step through and be precipitated into the passage.

But that is the very thing that happened, and it came near bringing the enterprise of the energetic Marines to an unhappy conclusion. Nevertheless, perhaps, it was fortunate that things turned out as they did, for the guard who stepped through into the subterranean avenue was so overwhelmed by the mass of sand and earth which closed in upon him, that his wits, his voice and his power of self-help deserted him.

Phil was taking his turn with the spade in the tunnel when this thing occurred. Fortu-

nately, he had stepped back several feet in order to bring the candle forward to a new niche he had just cut in the wall and was not covered by the avalanche of earth. As it was, he started back several feet, fearing that the whole roof of the tunnel was about to fall in, but was presently reassured by an appearance of the cause of the sudden interruption of his work.

A pair of coarse-broganned feet protruded from the heap of earth in the wrecked passageway and apprised him of the fact that someone—certainly not an American Marine—had been caught in a very effective trap, which had been intended for anything but a trap. Moreover, it was likely to prove a death trap in short order unless steps were taken to release the victim with all possible speed.

Phil took hold of the protruding brogans and pulled, but with no favorable result. He pulled again—the buried form moved slightly, and more earth slid down into the trench. The boy now realized that the situation was desperate—for the victim was no doubt a boche soldier; but the young Marine felt it a human duty to rescue him, nevertheless.

Just then he felt the presence of someone behind him, and as he turned to see who it was,

Dan Fentress took hold of one of the protruding legs and whispered:

"Here, we'll pull together. It'll be tough on him, but not so tough as leaving him there until we can shovel 'im out. He has some chance this way."

It was close quarters for two to work in side by side, but one strong pull together was effectual. A badly scared boche, hatless and with his face considerably the worse for rough dragging through a mass of earth and sharp stones, emerged, puffing with exhaustion and certainly not in condition to exclaim, "Thank you for saving my life!"

"Here's his gun," said Dan, reaching forward and pulling forth a Mauser from the loose earth that had almost buried it.

"And here's his pistol," said Phil, drawing a murderous looking weapon from the fellow's holster. "He must be a general handy man for all kinds of service."

The prisoners' prisoner, who was rapidly recovering from the effects of his mishap and violent handling, sat up presently and looked about him with astonishment. Evidently he did not know what to make of the situation.

"See here, my good enemy friend," Dan warned, pointing the Mauser at his head; "no

noise out o' you, or I'll send you to the place where Kultur gets all the reward comin' to it. We're Marines, not submarines; and we hit *above* water."

"Every word of that is lost on him," said Phil, noting the blank expression on the boche's countenance. "He's not a very intelligent fellow—the better for us right now. He's one of those old fellows they've dragged into the army to perform duties of secondary importance. We'd better get him back in the cellar and let some o' the other boys take care of 'im."

The unfortunate guard proved to be able to get on his feet and walk back to where the other Marines were waiting anxiously for an explanation of the disturbances that had reached their ears. Phil told the story in a few words and then said:

"You fellows stay here and take care of this prisoner, and I'll go out and reconnoiter. I want to see the lay o' the land. Maybe we've done all the digging necessary. With this guard out of the way, the coast may be clear to the south. We want to know where we're going before we start."

"Let me go along," Dan requested. "I've got a notion that two spies working together can do better than one."

"Come on, then," Phil responded. "Is that satisfactory to you fellows?"

The speaker by this time was acknowledged by all as their leader. Half a dozen were now in the basement giving their assistance in shifts in the preparations for escape. They nodded assent to this latest suggestion.

A minute later Phil and Dan had crawled up over the pile of earth at the end of the tunnel and were creeping over the ground toward the supposed stonequarry.

CHAPTER XIX

OVERHEARD IN A SANDPIT

CAREFULLY the boys peered in every direction for signs of the presence of guards in the vicinity, but apparently the boche whom they had captured had been the only one stationed south of the house. They reached the edge of the large excavation without an alarm to themselves or the enemy, and then began an examination of the descent for an avenue of departure for themselves and their waiting companions in the house.

The night was clear, but there was no moon; and it was difficult, with the aid of only the stars, to get a satisfactory view any considerable distance ahead of them. However, it is well known that one can accustom his eyes to ordinary darkness of night to such an extent that he is able to discern distant objects with a clearness that at first would seem impossible.

And so it was that after lying several minutes at the edge of what at first seemed to be a steep bluff, they found that they could make out the edge of a deep pit directly to the south and a hill-like descent that curved along to the left gradually to the southward. Bushes grew here

and there along this winding hill-path, so that it was evident that they must make their inspection rod by rod, if not yard by yard, in order to determine of what value it was to them.

"Let's go down there and see what it looks like," Phil whispered in his companion's ear.

Dan nodded his willingness, and soon they were creeping along the course indicated. After they had left a considerable screen of bushes behind, they stood erect and looked carefully about them; then continued their descent. They stopped, however, several times on the way, looking about and listening intently for evidence of the presence of enemy soldiers. In one of these precautionary halts, Phil said to his companion scout:

"I don't believe this is a stonequarry at all. It's a big sandpit, according to my notion. And this is a path used by the workmen who live up on the higher ground. I bet it leads right down to the entrance of the pit."

"I believe you're right," Dan returned. "There's so all-fired much sand around here, it can't be otherwise. How far do you think we'd better go? Everything looks clear in this direction."

"Let's go down to the foot of this hill and see how things look there before we go back," Phil proposed in reply.

They continued to the bottom of the hill and found themselves at the wide entrance of a huge sandpit with bushes growing in abundance along the border nearest their approach. Here they stood close to a clump of bushes, listening and peering cautiously in all directions for warning sounds or signs indicating the presence of enemy soldiers in the vicinity.

The warning came almost immediately. The sound of voices in conversation only a few feet from them caused the boys to stand as still almost as the ground on which they stood. They held their breath, as it were, and listened eagerly to catch the words being exchanged by two men on the opposite side of the thicket.

Apparently the conference was very secret, for the principals had sought a dark and out-of-the-way place to "put their heads together," and the eagerness of their tones indicated the degree of importance they placed on the purpose of the interview. But it was in German, and although both of the listeners had studied that language at school, they were unable to form a clear idea as to the main purpose of the conversation.

It did not take Phil long, however, to identify one of the men. His high-pitched voice and tripping utterance, little short of a stutter, could hardly have been duplicated by another.

Without a doubt he was the oddly proportioned commissioned officer who had been in charge of the squad of boches that Phil had captured at Belleau Woods and who later, with the assistance of another, had turned the tables on him.

"It's my boaconstrictor evil genius," Phil mused, although not very apprehensively. "How I wish I could make out what they are talking about."

He did, however, catch a few words that intensified his curiosity, although they carried to his mind little or no enlightenment. Considerable was said about an aeroplane and "the Americans" and bombs. Phil and Dan both strained their ears and their imagination to put these and other single-word ideas together and uncover the meaning of the interview, but in vain. Both had studied "literary German" at school, but their knowledge of conversational Prussian was exceedingly limited.

Ten or fifteen minutes after Phil and Dan arrived at the mouth of the sandpit, the conversation ended and the two men departed, starting up the path by which the escaped prisoners had descended. The latter waited a minute or two for them to get a good start, and were about to follow them and, if possible, prevent them from giving the alarm if they

discovered the wrecked tunnel leading from their prison, when a new surprise of startling nature added another thrill to the adventures of the night.

"Phil!"

This utterance of Sergeant Speed's given name was scarcely above a whisper, but distinct. The latter shivered as if a ghost had touched him on the shoulder. Then concluding with a desperate denial of his "sense of sound location," that it must have been his companion that spoke to him, he turned to Dan to ask him what he wanted. But the latter was looking about curiously to learn the source of the familiar address.

A moment later both of them beheld a third human form standing a few feet away and instinctively assumed an attitude of defense, prepared to change it into one of attack, when the supposed stranger spoke thus in low tones:

"Don't be alarmed, Phil. I am Tim Turner whom you left for dead in Belleau Woods."

CHAPTER XX

ESCAPE

"WELL, of all the most wonderful things that ever happened this is out of the ordinary!"

One of the characteristics that made Phil a good soldier was the fact that it was almost impossible to astound him. A fellow Marine commented on this fact once, and he replied:

"Sure. If a Hun plane should drop a bomb on the end of my nose in the middle of the night, I shouldn't be the least bit surprised."

His first impulse when Tim Turner presented himself to him and Dan Fentress in the middle of the night at the entrance of the French sandpit was to say something ridiculous. So he popped an anticlimax, which amounted to serving notice on himself and his two friends that this was no place for astonishment. The situation was therefore cleared up for the benefit of all three with two sentences:

"I came to just as you and your captors were leaving and followed to help you, but was captured, put to work on the soup truck, and escaped tonight," said Tim.

"We tunneled out of our prison, came here to see if the coast was clear, and are going back now to get a bunch of prisoners who are waiting for our report," said Phil.

"Go on, and I'll wait till you get back this way," Tim proposed.

"All right," Phil assented. "We must hustle along to see if those two boches stumble into our tunnel. It caved in before we finished it."

That ended the conversation, and the two prisoner-scouts hastened up the hill after the two enemy soldiers, whose mysterious conference, held under appearances of the most careful secrecy, caused Phil and Dan to wonder more and more as they puzzled over the few words they had been able to understand. Halfway up the incline they caught sight of the worthy pair, walking leisurely and almost arm-in-arm, totally unsuspicious, it appeared, of the proximity of any unfriendly humans at large.

Near the top of the hill they turned to the right and soon were moving along a highway that led into the heart of the town. The two scouts were greatly relieved by this, as it virtually precluded any possibility of their discovering the escape tunnel leading from the cellar of the prison and overlooking the sand-

pit. The shorter route for them would have been across the unfenced yard into which the tunnel had been cut.

A minute later Phil and Dan were back again in the basement and reporting the success of their scouting expedition. The prisoner of the prisoners had been bound and gagged and lay like a mummy in one corner, scowling weirdly in the dim candle light. After inspecting his bonds and gag to make certain that he was not likely to work loose or raise an alarm with his voice, Phil announced that all was ready for a departure. This announcement was communicated to the prisoners upstairs and presently all were assembled in the cellar and ready to file out through the tunnel.

Phil desired very much to talk over plans with the other escaping prisoners, but the presence of the captured boche advised him that it was not well to run the risk of his being able to understand English. So they filed out with only a "follow the leader" understanding.

Phil and Dan led the way down the hill to the point where Corporal Tim waited for their reappearance. Then they selected a sequestered nook, partly shielded with a growth of high bushes near the mouth of the sandpit and there held a conference.

"It seems to me that this is a case of every

man for himself," Evans remarked after several of the boys, with less constitutional initiative, had put, or seconded, the question, "What shall we do next?"

"Yes," Phil agreed; "I don't believe there's any argument to be made against that. If we keep together, we're bound to attract attention. If we travel singly, or in twos, we can hide better in the daytime. We'll be hampered, too, with these uniforms. If we separate, traveling by night and hiding in the daytime, perhaps some of us may be able to exchange them in some of these French villages for something less convicting. We may find some old work clothes that the boches overlooked or rejected with contempt, or we may find some French inhabitants caught in the big drive of the enemy, who will bend an effort to help us camouflage our American looks."

"Before we separate, I want to make an announcement."

Everybody turned questioningly toward the speaker.

"Who are you?" asked one of the escaped prisoners who stood near the boy that volunteered this interposition and looked curiously into his face. Evidently the inquisitor had spotted him as a stranger.

"He's all right," said Phil, coming to the

support of his friend. "Boys, this is Tim Turner who was with us at Belleau Woods. After I was captured, he followed in the dusk, hoping to be able to come to my relief. But he also was taken prisoner and escaped today. Dan Fentress and I found him down here, or, rather, he found us, and he's been waiting for our return with you boys. What is it, Tim? What announcement do you want to make?"

"This," the bullet-headed corporal answered. "I don't believe you and Dan caught the significance of what those two Huns were talking about down here, did you?"

"No, we'll have to confess that we didn't," Phil replied. "We flunked bad in our German test."

"Well, I got it," Tim continued impressively. "I never studied German at school, but I worked for a German farmer two years and got so I could carry on a conversation with him and his family without any trouble. Those two Huns were planning one of the most fiendish plots you ever heard of—dastardly, just about as bad as sinking the Lusitania or torturing Belgian women and children. They were planning to kill most, or all, of the prisoners in this place and make it appear that an American did the deed."

CHAPTER XXI

THE PLOT

"I UNDERSTOOD almost every word they uttered and the plot is as clear as day," Tim declared excitedly. "It's simply dastardly and as treacherous as the violation of the Belgian treaty. Incidentally I learned something more, too, that will interest you considerably.

"One of those boche plotters is connected way high up, a distant relative of the kaiser himself, as I got it. He's the fellow with the big girth—one of the bunch that captured you and brought you back behind their lines. It was plain that the other fellow held him in a good deal of awe, if he was only a second lieutenant.

"This other fellow is an aviator, I wasn't long finding out. There's an aviation field a short distance from here, and the 'taube chauffeur' flies from that field. The kaiser's umpty-umpth nephew cooked the scheme up in his own cranium and called the flyer to the conference in the sandpit. He called the aviator Hertz, and Hertz addressed him mostly as

Count, once or twice Count Topoff, and once referred to him as 'a general in disguise.'

"Well, the plot they cooked up was this—or rather it seemed to be cooked up in the brain of 'the count' and was dished out to Hertz to swallow willy-nilly: The bunch of prisoners are to continue their march toward the Rhine tomorrow—or today. Is it past midnight yet? And Hertz is to come along in his aeroplane loaded with bombs. The officers are to announce that it's an American plane on a bombing expedition and are to keep the prisoners bunched together with threats to shoot them if they try to get away.

"'He's arter us,' the guards will tell the prisoners; 'and the only way we can save our lives from his bombs and machine gun is to keep our guns trained on you, and we'll have to stand off at a distance to keep you from rushing us. Now, if you behave yourselves and obey orders, you'll save not only your own lives but ours, too. But if you make trouble for us, we'll kill as many of you as we can before he gets us, and he'll have to treat each of us as a separate target, for we're all scattered out around you.'

"Well, along will come the supposed American plane from the west and it's figured that the prisoners will drink in the boches' warn-

ing and huddle together like a lot o' barnyard fowl in a cold rain. Hertz will then proceed to drop a dozen or more bombs on them, while the guards stand off at a distance and watch the fun."

"But what's the purpose in such a program as that?" someone inquired. "Why shouldn't they go ahead and commit their wholesale murder in cold blood and admit they're responsible for the whole business? They haven't anything to be afraid of."

"They've two reasons for doing it the way they planned," Tim replied. "Those reasons were expressed very clearly in the course of their conversation. First, some o' the boche leaders are pretty sore because of the reputation they've got for committing frightful cruelties, and a kind of chicken-hearted warning has gone out from some high source to put on the soft pedal. Still, it seems to be in the make-up of some of those scoundrels to do the most fiendish things they can think of. If they can satisfy their lust for curdled blood and throw the blame on somebody else, they can also flatter their vanity for putting the thing over with very smooth cunning. Then again, it would key up the morale of the boche soldiers to a high pitch if the story could be circulated that the Americans were such dum-

mies that they are likely to commit such blunders as this fake affair will seem to be. You see, Hertz is going to fly in a captured French machine and will be dressed in the uniform of an American prisoner."

"Can you beat that for sheer rascality?" Evans exclaimed. "Do you know, fellows, I don't feel like trying to escape and leaving all those other boys to die like rats in a trap when a word from us passed among them might at least give them a chance to make some of those fiends pay the penalty of their dastardly plot when it's put into effect. There are only about a score of guards in charge of this bunch of prisoners and I believe they could be overpowered if a concerted rush were made at the right time."

"I confess that I feel the same way," said Sergeant Phil vengefully. "But really, boys, it isn't necessary for all of us to go back. One of us would be enough. He could pretend to be in sympathy with the boche cause and tell them he refused to go with the rest. That probably would get him considerable favor with them and enable him to do some effective work."

"Who's going to be the one to go back?" asked Evans, thereby propounding a question not at all easy to answer. Undoubtedly all of

the sixteen escaped prisoners were not equally well fitted to handle the matter with like promise of success. Phil realized this, and, without intending to arrogate superior qualities to himself, replied:

"I will, unless someone else can show good reason why he could do the job better than I can."

"I'm conceited enough to believe that I can do it just as well," said Evans. "Unless you can show good reason why you can do it better than I can, I demand that you match coins with me to determine who shall go."

"Where are the coins?"

"Hold on," interposed Dan Fentress. "You two aren't going to have a monopoly on this business. I want to come in on it."

"All right," said Evans; "you ought to be able to outwit a score of pie-faced boches with those squint eyes o' yours. But I think we'd better close the nominations now, hadn't we?"

"Not till I get in on it, if you'll admit an outsider," Tim protested eagerly. "I don't exactly belong to your bunch, for the boches sort o' took me over as chief cook an' bottle washer, but I don't object to being traitor to my new alliance if you don't."

"We'll let you in on it, nobody objecting," Evans ruled. "But unless somebody speaks

up quick, the nominations are closed. One, two, three—they're closed. Now, how shall we vote? Anybody got a coin to flip?"

Nobody had.

"Let's settle it among us four candidates," Phil proposed. "Nobody shall vote for himself. Everybody decide whom he will vote for and as soon as you're all ready I'll say 'one, two,' and instead of 'three' I'll call out my vote. You do likewise."

This was agreed upon. Presently all announced that they were ready and Phil began, "One, two—

"Evans."

"Fentress."

"Speed."

"Speed."

Phil was elected.

CHAPTER XXII

GOOD-BY

THE ceremony of good-bys was short following Phil's election to return as a messenger of warning to the other prisoners concerning the fiendish plot for their destruction. Few words of advice were exchanged as to what each escaping prisoner should do. It was a case of everybody for himself with no sure promise of success for anybody. Nobody knew any more than anybody else concerning the country through which they must pass or how they might hope to conceal themselves in the daytime, or how obtain food for their already hungry stomachs. Everybody must work his wits to the limit.

This, in fact, seemed to be the general understanding, for each of the escaping prisoners apparently took it for granted that the responsibility for his own success or failure in this most important venture rested entirely on himself. No questions were asked. Everybody seemed to desire to strike out for himself as soon as possible. A few went in pairs, but most of them set out alone.

Tim said good-by to Phil last. The bullet-

headed corporal, who had proved himself a boy of no mean intelligence by the manner in which he had got evidence of the wholesale-murder plot of "Count Topoff" and Aviator Hertz and reported it to his friends, was evidently much disappointed because he had not been elected to return to the prison camp of his comrade Marines and Frenchmen and warn them against the menace that would soon be upon them.

"I'm sorry I'm not going with you," he said to his friend. "I envy you very much, old man, for while the rest of us are running away, you are going back to fight. That's what it means, Phil, a very hard fight, and a lot of credit to you for preventing a wholesale and cowardly slaughter."

"You evidently expect us to come out victorious," Phil observed.

"Of course. Why not?" Tim returned with something of a challenge in his tone of voice. "Don't you?"

"No, Tim, I can't say that I do. Frankly, I am disposed to say good-by to you right now for the last time."

"You're not enough of an optimist for a venture of this kind," Tim declared regretfully. "Don't you expect to be able to communicate the warning to the other fellows?

If you don't, you'd better let me take your place, for I'm dead sure I can do it."

"I admire your self-confidence," Phil replied deliberatively; "and if I didn't feel that I could perform the duty commissioned to me as well as you could, I'd do as you suggest. Moreover, you'd be at a disadvantage because you'd have to return to the job you left or the boches 'u'd discover the transfer and want to know the meaning of it."

"I wouldn't care for that," Tim said quickly. "All I'd care for would be to get my story started among the boys and let them take care o' the rest."

"But I'm planning to be right on the job and do some o' the fighting," Phil announced eagerly. "You see, I have the pistol I took from the boche that fell into our tunnel. I can do some good work with that right at the beginning."

"You don't talk as if you expected to be licked," Tim interrupted.

"Oh, I'm not going into the fight like a coward," Phil answered reassuringly. "Up to the time when we actually mix, I suppose I shall expect to lose everything under my hat, but when I once get into the fight, I can easily imagine myself believing that I was going to lick the whole boche army single-handed. I'm

sure I can feel that way if I can only fill my stomach with something substantial in the way of food. Well, good-by, Tim. I must be moving along now, and so must you. I haven't much idea what time it is, but I should judge from the feeling of my empty stomach that it's almost breakfast time. I want to get back into some place, if I can, where I won't be suspected of having anything to do with the night's escapade."

"Good-by," said Tim, squeezing his friend's hand. "Good-by and good luck. All things considered, I believe now that it's fortunate you were picked for this job. At first I had an idea I was the only one who could do it right. But I have come around to the view that you're going to make good in a way that I might not be able to. Hope to meet you on the other side of No Man's Land in a few days.

Phil started up the hill again while his friend stole away in the opposite direction, taken generally by the other escaping Marines.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FIGHT IN THE CELLAR

PHIL returned at once to the prison from which he and his companions had just escaped. He had one purpose in this move. The excitement of their departure had caused him to forget one very important thing that he had planned to do before leaving the place. That was to transfer the guard's pistol cartridges to his own person. While engaged in his good-by conversation with Tim, he placed his hand on the pocket containing the weapon he had taken from the captured guard, and this reminded him of his neglect to take possession of the available supply of ammunition.

The candles had been snuffed out just before the prisoners stole away through the tunnel and down the path by the sandpit. Phil was not exactly certain whether he was pleased or displeased with this fact. If the bound and gagged boche guard still lay in the southeast corner of the cellar where he had been left, the returning Marine would have no trouble finding him; but if he had rolled away in his efforts to liberate himself, undoubtedly a light would be a very desirable aid in locating him.

Phil crept back through the tunnel cautiously; not that he anticipated trouble from any source just now, but his every act under present circumstances must of necessity be stealthy and careful. And so, in spite of his caution, he was totally unprepared for what took place as he reentered the cellar.

He scarcely realized what happened, too, for the blow that fell on him half stunned him. It was a vicious blow, and if it had not glanced from the side of his head, it must surely have knocked him out. As it was, the spade, or shovel, which was the weapon in the hands of his assailant, bounded from his head to his shoulder and thence with a dull metallic clang on the clayey floor.

Phil staggered, but struggled desperately to keep from falling, and then made a dive for the dark form whose outlines he could faintly distinguish by the starlight that came in through the window from which several of the prisoners had removed their coats before departing. But the fellow undoubtedly expected this move and, having, under the circumstances, better control of his wits, got a better hold on the returning Marine and quickly threw him on his back.

The latter, meanwhile was rapidly recovering from the effects of the blow on his head,

and realizing that his enemy would fasten his fingers on the throat of his victim as soon as possible, pressed his chin hard against his chest, threw his left arm over his face for protection and passed his right hand down to his right hip pocket.

He was thankful now that it was dark for there was no possibility of the boche's seeing what he was doing. Meanwhile, Phil affected to be trying to throw off his assailant, while in fact he was merely elevating his right hip in order that he might draw the pistol that he had taken from the captured guard less than an hour before.

The ruse was successful. In a few moments the muzzle of the weapon was pressed against the side of the boche, who was struggling hard to get his fingers around Phil's throat. The boy sergeant set his teeth as he had never set them before and pulled the trigger.

The explosion was well muffled by the burying of the muzzle in the clothing of the desperately vicious fellow, who probably was bent on having a full revenge for the treatment he had received at the hands of the Yank prisoners. Doubtless none of the other guards in the vicinity could hear the sound of the discharge of the weapon, in spite of the vent afforded by the tunnel. Phil felt not the least

uneasiness on this score after hearing the dull thud against the body of the man on top of him.

The latter collapsed with scarcely a groan. Phil rolled him off and got up, returning the firearm to his pocket and saying to himself:

"Awful sorry for you, boche, but I couldn't help it. Maybe you weren't so much to blame after the kind of training you fellows 'ave had. I wonder what Tim would say about me now—would he think I'm a mollycoddle? Really I'm beginning to believe that he was right when he predicted that I'd be successful in my mission. I feel at this moment as if I could lick the whole boche army all alone.

"But I mustn't stop to philosophize or Tim 'u'd call me a worse fool than ever. First I must have that belt o' yours. It probably holds pistol cartridges for me and gun cartridges for Tim. Yes, there it is and off it comes—and—around me it goes. Now, what next? I wonder if I ought to take it. Yes, I believe I will. He's a bigger fellow than I am and his uniform 'll go over mine very snugly. That'll camouflage me for immediate purposes, and when I don't want it any longer I can skin it off. So here goes."

Twenty minutes later Phil was creeping out of the cellar again "super-clad" with the

guard's uniform which he had removed from the apparently lifeless form and transferred over his own khaki.

"I wonder how he ever freed himself of those bonds," the boy muttered as he moved crouchingly toward the bushes at the head of the descending pathway. "I suppose we didn't tie his wrists as securely as we thought we did and he worked loose. Anyway, I don't believe he'll 'work loose' again. But I'm sorry for him and hope he's only wounded enough to keep him helpless till he can't do us any more harm. Say, wouldn't it be glorious if everybody shot in this war were only wounded and would get well again after it's all over? But war 'u'd be only a game o' ten pins then, wouldn't it?

"Gee! I'm a bum soldier. If I confessed such a sentiment as that to Tim, he'd shoot me on the spot for a Prussian propagandist."

CHAPTER XXIV

ANOTHER CAPTURE

"NOW, what next?"

Phil stopped a minute or two and considered. First, he must find out where some of the other prisoners had been housed or corralled. Then he must devise means of access into their presence without being challenged by the guards.

He decided finally that any course that he might adopt must be preceded by a little preliminary scouting at random. So he started out with this in view, advancing toward a large building which he had observed casually the evening before but had been unable to determine whether it was a church or a village hall. Perhaps some of his comrades were housed in there.

The prisoners had been lodged for the night in several sections after being fed in as many divisions from a like number of soup and stale-bread services, and Phil had not seen where any of them, aside from those in his own party, were put. Right now, however, he found himself wondering why the church-or-village-hall edifice hadn't been selected as a way-prison for

all the captured French and Americans, if indeed it had not been chosen for that purpose.

He decided to inspect this place first of all. It was next door to the house in which he had spent an eventful half-night as a prisoner of war, but there was no window in that house on the side next to the large building, so that he had been unable to observe what might have taken place near the latter structure during his imprisonment. The rear yard of the premises bordered on a bush-and-sapling wildwood tangle that extended over the hill bordering the big sandpit, and Phil advanced cautiously through this thicket to the edge about sixty feet from the rear end of the building.

There he halted and stood for several minutes surveying the faint outlines of everything perceptible. At first the scene appeared to be a sort of silhouetted picture of desertion. Not a sound reached his ears save the slight rustling of leaves in the breeze, the faint boom of cannon in the distance, and the rumbling of supply trucks on the nearest army thoroughfare, and nothing out of the ordinary in the dim objects in his immediate vicinity at first attracted his special attention.

But presently a dark form, which at first his passing notice had interested him about as much as a log of wood might have done, moved

slightly. Phil started, scarcely willing to believe his eyes. If it was a guard, he was lying down. But possibly it was a dog sleeping. The boy was scarcely willing to believe this, however, although he had no good reason for his skepticism. Nevertheless, it was sustained presently in a substantial manner when the living thing sat up and looked about him a few moments. There could be no doubt now that it was a man.

Phil strained his eyes eagerly for further manifestation as to the character of the fellow not more than twenty feet away from him. Presently his sitting form seemed to waver and he lay down again so suddenly that the watcher's irresistible first impression was that he fell.

"That's funny," thought the boy. "What's the matter with him?—asleep at his post? If I had a couple of fellows with me, I think I'd tap him on the head and take his gun away from him. Why didn't we think of something o' the kind? I really believe that half a dozen unarmed men could turn the tables in this camp tonight by using their wits a little. These boches are as careless as can be. They seem to think that because they're behind their own lines they're perfectly safe and their prisoners wouldn't dare start anything rough."

Just then Phil was thrilled at the sight of two dimly outlined human forms stealing out of the thicket fifteen or twenty feet to his right and advancing cautiously toward the reclining figure. Then suddenly they pounced upon him, one of them evidently seizing him by the throat, for, although he struggled desperately he was unable to make an outcry.

"My goodness!" was the uncovalized exclamation of the watcher. "Who are they? Are some of the other prisoners out and attempting the very thing that just occurred to me? I'll have to find out and take a hand in this."

Presently it appeared that the victim of the surprise attack had been choked into unconsciousness, for his captors picked him up and carried him back into the thicket and laid him down not more than six feet from the spot where Phil stood. The latter dared not move, for fear lest he be discovered, for he was not certain yet whether he was in the presence of friends or enemies. All doubt on this score was removed the next instant, however, when he heard one of the captors address the other in tones scarcely above a whisper:

"There, Tim, our first strike was a bloomin' good success. If we can keep this up half a dozen more times, we can go back home as chesty as a hunchback and get away with it."

CHAPTER XXV

A CHAPTER OF WIND

IF he had not been afraid of creating noises that would reach the ears of other enemy guards in the vicinity, Phil undoubtedly would have rushed toward his two friends, who had appeared so unexpectedly on the scene, and have welcomed them as if separated from him for years, instead of an hour, more or less. Tim's companion was none other than Arthur Evans, one of the most interesting and capable of all the young sergeant's comrades captured by the boches.

As it was, Phil merely advanced a pace or two and said in cautious tones:

"Hello, Tim, Evans. This is Phil Speed. What are you fellows up to?"

The two Marines thus addressed turned quickly, first to resist, then to welcome, the intruder.

"We're attacking the enemy in the rear while our friends at Belleau Woods meet him in front," replied Evans. "By the way, how have you succeeded thus far?"

"I don't think I ought to answer that question," Phil replied with mock severity. "Evi-

dently you haven't enough confidence in me to let me carry out my mission. You are decidedly weak in your judgment, to say the least. Suppose you had made a blunder and spoiled all my plans."

"But we didn't," Evans returned; "and, as matters stand, I have a sort of conceit that we've helped matters along. Isn't it so?"

"Yes, I guess it is."

"Well, what're you kicking about?"

"I'm kicking right at this instant because we're doing entirely too much talking to no purpose and running great risk of being overheard by dangerous ears. What are you trying to do?"

"Evans and I bumped into each other after you and I separated," said Tim, taking on himself the task of explaining. "He's the one that lost confidence in you—not I. Or rather, he was very much concerned, being afraid you would walk right into a death trap. So he persuaded me to come back and watch around and see if we could be of some assistance if you got into trouble.

"Well, we got back, which was only a short distance, and what do you think we discovered? You could never guess, unless you have found it out for yourself. I won't keep you guessing for this is no place for trifling. We

discovered that every last one of the guards around this place is drunk."

Phil's little gasp of astonishment was enough to settle any doubt his friends may have had as to his previous information on the subject of the bibulous laxity of the guards.

"I suppose they must 'ave found a French wine cellar or something o' the kind," Tim continued. "You saw this fellow rouse up and topple over just before we jumped on him, I presume. Well, he was as drunk as a lord, and we gave him a choking that will keep him asleep until a Chicago police pulmotor arrives to pump oxygen into his lungs."

"Why Chicago and not Philadelphia?" inquired Phil who hailed originally from the latter metropolis.

"Because Chicago is the 'Windy City,' and we shut off this fellow's wind, which was not an act of brotherly love,—Philadelphia,—if you please."

"Very good," returned Phil quietly. "But we've expended enough wind over this subject already and had better get busy. I had some lively experience also since I left you, but my story will hold for future telling. What shall we do now?—go around and tap the other guards on the head or shut off their wind?"

"No, I don't think we'll have to do much

more than disarm them and keep them quiet until we liberate the prisoners," Evans answered. "We have two guns now—took one from this fellow. I don't think we'll have much trouble with them."

Evans held forward the weapon referred to as he spoke.

"I have a pistol, too, that belonged to the guard who fell into our tunnel," Phil remarked by way of reminder.

"That's so," said Evans. "I forgot about that. We're well armed. Come on, and we'll have our game all bagged before the Crown Prince can say papa twice."

CHAPTER XXVI

TURNING THE TABLES

EVANS and Turner, who were making a circumambulating inspection of the prison quarters while Phil engaged in desperate combat with a boche soldier in a dark pocket of the earth, led the way to another sentry post on the east side of the large building and there found a second guard decidedly under the influence of liquor. He was seated on a low concrete fence that marked the dividing line between yard and the cul-de-sac, or little used stub of a street, that ran up to the edge of the thicket which covered the hill adjoining the big sandpit.

The guard was no longer a guard. His gun was lying on the ground and his head hung almost between his knees. He was snoring.

"No need o' disturbing him," said Evans, as he picked up the rifle and handed it to Phil. "He's dreamin' about the iron cross the kaiser's about to bestow on him for faithful service."

They passed on to the next post, but there found a more lively minion of the Prussian

War Lord. He was evidently "under the influence," but not so much so that he was unable to spring to his feet in alarm as he heard footsteps near him. The next instant he was looking into the muzzles of three rifles and three very determined faces which must have resembled, in his startled imagination, the weapons and merciless countenances of a trio of highwaymen.

"You keep him right where he is," said Evans, addressing Tim, while the latter took charge of the fellow's gun and cartridge belt.

Tim did as directed and his companions continued their rounds. They found one more guard dead drunk and still another in a condition similar to that of Tim's prisoner. They took possession of their guns and then returned with another staggering prisoner to the place where the young corporal stood guard over Semi-Drunk Number 1. The two captives were also relieved of their cartridge belts.

"Now where are the rest of the guards?" Phil inquired.

"They're lodged snugly in that hotel down on the corner a block over there," replied Tim, indicating the direction with his hand. "And they've got some comfortable quarters, too, believe me. That hotel was hardly scratched

when the boches drove through this place. Everything was left, apparently, in the best of order by the fleeing French, and our prison guards are living like kings there. They've found a big store of wine in the basement and tapped several casks."

"What's their condition now?" asked Phil.

"About the same as these fellows out here. Tim and I looked in through a window and saw them."

"Where are their guns?"

"Standing up in a corner right near the door," said Tim. "We can open the door, seize the weapons and have 'em at our mercy."

"How about the other prisoners?"

"They're all in this building, according to my notion," said Evans. "My guess is that they planned to put us all in there, but it got too full, and, our bunch being the overflow, they put us in the first place available."

"Let's go and get several of those fellows to help us," Phil proposed. "We may not need them, but it isn't going to do any harm to play safe. You boys wait here while I go and announce what we've done and bring some 'moral reinforcements.'"

"Go ahead," Evans assented. "Bring 'em all, if you want to. The more that come, the greater will be the moral effect, even if they

haven't any guns. But tell 'em to be mighty quiet."

Phil hastened to the entrance of the building, which opened onto a small pillared portico at the head of half a dozen steps. There was a stout bar across the door holding it firmly in place, and this he lifted away and found that there was no further obstacle to his entering.

It was so dark inside that he could not, at first, see his hand before him. So he closed the door and called out:

"Hello."

A few moments' silence followed this greeting; then an echoing response came from a point several feet away:

"Hello."

"We've made prisoners of all the guards around this building and the others are all dead drunk waiting for us to walk in and take their guns," Phil announced. "There's a plot on foot to wipe us all out tomorrow by dropping bombs on us from an aeroplane. Some of us overheard the plot. Three of us have handled the job thus far, but we want to play safe. So if a dozen of you fellows will come along we'll soon make it impossible for those villains to carry out their dastardly plot."

As this speech was delivered in English, it

was not understood by the French prisoners, and only Americans responded to the call. But before they filed out through the entrance, Phil addressed to the other Americans a request that they remain quietly in the building until notified that the coast was clear, and delegated to several of his compatriots who could speak French the task of explaining the situation to their companion poilus in prison.

Outside, three men were left in charge of the two boche prisoners who had not yielded quite all their senses to intoxication. Then the rest of the party proceeded to the inn where the "bunch of off-duty convivials" seemed to have transferred their interest in the outcome of the war into several casks of "concentrated thirst." They were lying in all attitudes and aspects of alcoholic abandon. Evidently the last man who had taken a drink was so lost to everything but his last swallow that, after filling the tin cup which all appeared to have used for tipping the fiery liquid into their stomachs, left the cock open and the rest of the liquid in the cask ran out over the floor.

After the soldiers' guns had been secured and passed around among the men, Evans, who was possessed of a rather ghastly sense of humor, remarked:

"Fellows, I've got a scheme for putting these beastly boches into a state of mind and body that will render them harmless so far as we are concerned for a day of two. They've drunk all they can pour into themselves; I propose to finish the job by waking them up and filling them full to the guards."

"But we won't have time for that," Phil objected. "We ought to be getting away from here as quickly as possible. It'll be daylight before very long."

"We'll settle that question in a jiffy," said Evans, lifting a wristwatch of one of the drunken soldiers toward the candle light nearest him. Two of half-a-dozen candles, which had lighted the latter portion of the thirst orgies, were still burning when the escaping Yanks entered the place.

"It's only two-fifteen," Evans continued. "We've got time enough at least to make sure that these besotted fools have done a good job of this thing. I insist that we make of this affair the best argument for prohibition in the world. You know prohibition is about the biggest war issue at home today. Why, do you know, when they get wind of this story at home, there'll be a constant demand for us as Chautauqua speakers until the demon Rum has been put where we're going to put the kaiser."

CHAPTER XXVII

FOOD FOR PROHIBITION

SUCH an argument as this could hardly be controverted and Evans had his way. This mischievous Marine of vengeful imagination opened another cask of wine, which stood ready to be tapped, and "treated" those who had less than their capacity to the "amount they had cheated themselves out of."

The boches who had "stood" guard outside were all carried or conducted in and given the "third degree test." At this Evans proved himself a master. If there was any "wake" in them, he discovered it. He behaved like a sailor on a lark in a nest of cornered and cowed pirates, and most of the other fellows caught the spirit and took a hand in the sport. By the time the job was finished most of the cask just tapped had been poured down the throats of six or eight rousable "soaks" and they rolled over actually "running over at the brim."

"Now come on, fellows," said Evans enthusiastically. "We've done our deed well. We're off now for home, after a little more fighting, and the Chautauqua platform. But

I want the testimony of every one of you that not one of us drunk a drop. Am I right?"

"Right," was the chorused response.

There was no need of further delay. The boys had taken possession of twenty Mauser rifles, a dozen pistols, and a good supply of cartridges for all these weapons. If they had felt it would be of any advantage to them to do so, they would have stripped the drunken guards of their uniforms and passed them around among themselves. But these, it was decided, were hardly likely to be of service to them, inasmuch as they could not pass for Prussian soldiers unless they separated from the other Americans and French who were unable to obtain uniforms. Phil was the first one to advance this idea, at the same time doffing the suit that he had stripped from the guard with whom he fought a deadly combat and expressing the opinion that the entire body of escaping prisoners ought to "stick together for common protection."

"We have guns and pistols now for more than thirty of us, and a good supply of ammunition," he said. "It wouldn't be fair for those of us who are armed to leave those who are unarmed."

"You wouldn't have us fight the whole Ger-

man army in the rear, would you?" one of the Marines inquired.

"We sha'n't have to," Phil replied. "In the first place, they'll never suspect that so many of us are armed. The main command of the German forces will have a hard time getting a clear statement of our escape from these drunken guards. They're not going to admit that they were drunk and they'll dodge as long as possible every question that will tend to show they were under the influence of liquor. Meanwhile we'll keep away from the main traveled highways over which the enemy truck lines run between the armies and the supply stations. Evidently they haven't been able to repair the French railroads as fast as they advanced. In a few days they probably will have them in running order and that will make conditions better for us, for the better rail service they have, the less they'll have to use the highways, and the freer the roads 'll be for us. To tell you the truth, everything is remarkably in our favor, and all we have to do is keep out of sight in the daytime and—and—work out our own salvation at night."

"And forage for something to eat," Tim added, slapping his middle significantly.

"Oh, yes, that reminds me," Phil said quickly. "While one of us goes and invites

our comrades in yonder prison to join us, the rest of us will load ourselves with provender from the truck where Tim cooked stew for us yesterday."

"That's just what I was goin' to suggest," the bullet-headed corporal put in.

"All right," Sergeant Speed continued, in a well satisfied tone of voice. "You go ahead and engineer that business and I'll bring out the other prisoners."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE PRISONERS FLEE

THE mess truck had been driven into the court of the hotel, and the escaping prisoners soon relieved it of its burden of food, principally hard-baked or canned. This was distributed as equally as possible among them all, and then the departure from the town was begun.

They were only a short distance from a main highway over which the noises of heavy and rapid traffic could be heard constantly. So their chief caution was to avoid attracting attention to their unusual proceedings from the soldiers and truckmen moving along this route.

It was quickly decided by the leaders of the escaping prisoners that they had better make their departure by way of the path that led down the hill near the sandpit, as it was well shielded for a quarter of a mile or more with small trees and bushes from the top of the hill down into a sort of ravine through which ran a small stream of water. Moreover, all admitted without debate that it was far more important for them to find a good place of con-

cealment than to travel any considerable distance toward the lines of battle before daylight.

Phil, Evans, Tim, and one or two others who had exhibited leadership qualifications walked ahead of the column of Americans and Frenchmen and held an almost incessant discussion of plans as they proceeded. The more important of their conclusions were passed back among their comrades in the rear to keep them informed and reassured that the leaders were conducting the escape intelligently. One line of suggestions offered by Phil and accepted by all with hopeful enthusiasm was as follows:

"We ought to work our way as close as we can to the rear line of the boches with safety, moving forward at night and hiding in the daytime, and wait for the time when the big drive of the Allies pushes the enemy back. After they have been pushed back beyond our hiding place, we can come out and rejoin our comrades and take a hand in the fight. I figure that it'll be principally open fighting with lots of rifle and machine-gun action. The boches won't be strongly intrenched, and if the Allies come back at 'em as strong as I believe they will, their heavy guns won't have much to do; and if we find good hiding places, we ought to

be comparatively safe. There'll be a lot o' bombs dropped from the air, but our chances of keeping out of their way will be much better than our chances would be in the midst of a heavy bombardment from big guns.

"The enemy's advance over these grounds has been very rapid and no doubt they have done little cleaning up after them. If we go along carefully, we ought to pick up enough guns and ammunition to arm every last one of us, and if we get in close quarters some time we'll be able to give a good account of ourselves. There's little danger of our meeting a very large body of the enemy miles behind their lines if we keep clear of their routes of communication."

"What's your idea of a good hiding place for us?" asked Tim.

"A deserted village like the one we've just left," Phil replied. "Second-best place perhaps would be a group of farm houses."

"How about food if the Allied drive holds off several weeks?" was Tim's next question.

"That's a matter we've got to look out for without delay. It'll probably be hard picking, but if everybody keeps his eyes open. All the gardens and fields no doubt have been pretty thoroughly devastated, and yet there's always

bound to be some pickin's left here and there. We may find a few chickens, if we watch carefully, but we'll have to knock 'em over with clubs—no shooting, you know."

These suggestions rendered Phil more popular than ever among the escaping American and French prisoners, so that by the time all had discussed them fully he was tacitly voted leader of the fugitive expedition. From that time on all looked to him for advice whenever any problem of common interest came up for solution.

The route taken was considerably of a "cross-country" character. They avoided highways that appeared to have been much frequented, for fear lest at any moment they run into an enemy patrol or expedition of some sort that would demand an explanation of their wanderings. So across fields and meadows and lowlands overgrown with weeds and bushes they went, until finally Phil called a halt near a group of farmhouses and said:

"It must be almost daybreak. Here are two or three houses and barns that ought to conceal us very well until the sun goes down again. Let's investigate, and if there's nobody on the premises we'll file in and take charge."

Several scouts were sent ahead to ascertain, if possible, whether the buildings were de-

serted. In a short time they reported that they were unable to find evidence of anybody in possession, and the little army of prisoners-at-large behind the enemy lines filed in and took refuge for a day's hiding.

CHAPTER XXIX

IN HIDING

THE first day of freedom for the escaped prisoners of war in the land of their captivity was spent midway between two lines of communication that ran from the boche armies back to their bases of supply. One of these routes lay about a mile to the north and the other about a mile to the south of the group of farm houses in which the fugitive Americans and French were concealed. At points in both of these routes they could see numerous motor vehicles rushing in both directions, probably bearing wounded and reserves as well as supplies. A little nearer to the north also could be seen crews of men at work repairing a railroad bed and tracks that undoubtedly had been blown up by the French in their retreat.

It was agreed that the men should move about very little in their quarters during the day. Lookouts were stationed at certain windows and doors of the farm buildings, although these positions were camouflaged as much as possible with articles of furniture, farm implements, straw, et cetera, to prevent any chance

betrayal of the hiding place of the escaped prisoners.

These lookouts also inspected as best they could the harvest possibilities of the agricultural vicinity, and it was estimated that even in the dark a considerable supply of vegetables and nearly ripened apples could be gathered. In a bin in one of the barns was discovered several bushels of year-old barley.

In the course of the day, between sleeps, Phil, Tim and Evans, from the loftiest viewpoint attainable in the cupola of one of the barns, made a studied survey of the country to the west. They found that they had approached to within a mile and a half of a small village directly in their course of advance, and that perhaps not more than two miles beyond this were the (probable) ruins of another French town. Phil had not been in France long before he observed that the municipalities, large and small, are situated much more closely together than are the cities and towns of even the most thickly populated portions of America.

Phil and Tim also had opportunity during this day to recount in detail their experiences to each other since their separation in Belleau Woods. Phil also questioned his friend regarding the wound that had rendered him unconscious for fifteen or twenty minutes on the

scene of the novel battle in the ravine. In reply, Tim pulled off his overseas cap and disclosed a small crudely-made plaster-bandage, that was held in place by the cap.

"It wasn't a bad wound," he explained; "but it might easily have fractured my skull. The bullet hit the side of my head a good hard rap, but glanced and cut a furrow in my scalp.

"I came to just as that funny looking bunch o' boches were leading you off through the timber. The sight o' that put a thrill of life into me and I staggered to my feet and started after you. The boches had left my gun lying on the ground, thinking, I suppose, that I was dead and would be unable to use it.

"I was just waiting until I could get control of myself before I opened fire on those pesky Huns. If I'd not felt quite so shaky on my pins I'd 'a' blazed away as soon as I waked up, for I figured the firing would attract friends our way. But I guess that fellow that jumped onto your back was the smartest one in their crowd, for he must 'a' figured we were likely to have comrades in the neighborhood and been on the lookout for 'em. Anyway, before long he played the same game on me that he played on you, sneaking around and jumpin' on me from behind.

"Well, they took me along with you only a

short distance behind, and you never knew I was trailing along. I walked back behind with a couple of boches and jollied them along the best I could. I guess I succeeded pretty well, judging from results.

"It seems that this squad were part of a regular crew that made trips with prisoners back behind the lines and took part in the fighting while waiting for a bunch of prisoners large enough for a trip. At least, that's what I gathered from their conversation. You know I learned to talk German pretty well while living with a German family in Pennsylvania, and I made good use of it with these fellows. Camouflaging my boasts with all the modesty I could put into words, I told 'em all about my accomplishments. I guess I hit 'em about right when I told 'em I could cook as well as any Pennslyvania-Dutch grandmother, and they set me to work on a mess truck right away. That's why you didn't see me during the trip, Phil. But I picked you out in the line."

"I don't admire your cooking very much," his friend commented with a smile. "Is that what you call Pennsylvania-Dutch cooking?"

Tim grinned ruefully.

" 'Tisn't my fault," he said. "Those parsimonious Prussians stood over me and told me how much oil I could burn to warm a barrel o'

stew. And if the first match didn't light the burner, you folks 'u'd have to eat your meal cold, they said. Oh, they've got everything down to an efficiency and conservation basis for winning the war, they have."

"How did you get away from them?" Phil asked.

"Just walked away," Tim replied in a matter-of-fact manner. "It was really funny. I guess they were all interested in that wine cellar that one o' them discovered, but I didn't know it at the time. Anyway, they seemed to lose all interest in me, and several times I found myself all alone. I was so astonished that I didn't have sense to cut stick until I concluded that I was an everlasting fool if I didn't, and I don't believe they know I'm gone yet."

"They'll know about the time they've sobered up," Phil returned with a prophetic grin. "And by the time the whole truth of developments dawns on them, there'll be something doing, believe me."

CHAPTER XXX

AN AUDACIOUS SCHEME

AS soon as the dusk of evening was sufficient to obscure objects of any considerable size at a distance of a hundred yards, several scouting and foraging parties were sent out with instructions to report back in about two hours. The foraging parties were directed to gather in whatever vegetables and fruit they were able to discover in the darkness, and the scouts were instructed to travel due west for several miles and determine if the way were clear for a general advance toward the battle area.

In the course of the day, Phil, Evans, Tim and several other leading spirits had held half a dozen conferences and discussed plans for the following night. It was during these conferences that the scouting and foraging plans had been outlined. A bird-call code was also agreed upon and practiced in the course of the day for the purpose of enabling the scouts and foragers to locate one another or their hide-out in case any of them should lose his way.

The latter precaution proved to be of considerable service, as did also a check-up system

adopted to determine when all who were sent out on their several missions had reported back. By about ten o'clock (estimated), therefore, the checking proved all to have returned with a gratifying supply of raw food, including apples, vegetables, half a dozen chickens and a young pig. The fowl had been captured alive, and it was decided to carry these to their next stopping place, but the pig, which one of the men had slain with a heavy club without the provocation of a squeal, had to be left behind.

The scouts brought back information to the effect that there was a clear field between them and the next town, and that a careful inspection failed to disclose a sign of an occupant in the place. So far as they were able to determine, the village was abandoned by both inhabitants and invaders.

Accordingly a silent, ghost-like march was made to this place. On the way they passed a score or more of bodies of dead soldiers and a like number of guns were found lying near them. Most of these were boches, as was later discovered by examination of their rifles and cartridge belts by the Americans and French who took possession of them.

"The advance over this ground was so rapid that they didn't have time even to pick up the arms of their own dead," Tim observed to Phil.

"So much the better for us," the latter replied. "And I've a suspicion that it will work to the benefit of the Allies in more ways than one. This is a drive of desperation, or I miss my guess, and the boches are going to find themselves in a trap. They can't possibly have enough reserves to maintain such an advance as this. I bet you'll find in the end that Marshal Foch is just leading them on."

"I wish he'd have General Pershing throw in some of his troops at this point," said Tim eagerly. "They'd drive these fellows back, and we could jump in and have some real fun as the Gray Coats came running past us."

"I can hardly hope that things will turn out just the way our dreams picture them," said Phil dubiously. "But it surely would be great if we could put over such a stunt as that. Anyway, when we pick our last hiding place we'll pick it with that in view."

"We don't want to advance too close to the enemy's lines," Tim argued; "because they may take a notion to back up a little and establish some kind of headquarters right where we are stationed."

"Yes, that's another thing we want to keep in mind. And we must also try to pick buildings that are not likely to interest them for any purpose."

These suggestions were communicated to the other escaped prisoners and were received with such favor that they were observed carefully in the selection of quarters not only for the following day, but for all the succeeding days that they remained in hiding behind the enemy's lines. And these succeeding days were more than they at first reckoned on. They had no way of knowing that the Marines had saved the day at Chateau Thierry as well as at Belleau Wood, but there was not an American in this company of escaped prisoners who did not firmly believe that the advance of the enemy was cut short the instant the Yanks got into the front line.

And so as they advanced day by day, or night by night, nearer to the enemy's lines, sometimes a mile, sometimes two or three miles, sometimes half a mile, they expected at any moment to discover evidence of a rapid boche retreat. However, more than five weeks elapsed before the hoped-for evidence of Allied victory appeared; after which events moved so rapidly that Phil felt like comparing his existence to life on the tail of a comet flying through space.

CHAPTER XXXI

PHIL'S STRATEGY

AGAIN we find Phil and Tim within easy gun-roar of the battle line. But this time they are on the "other side of No Man's Land." And the roar is becoming louder and louder. Early one morning it burst forth with great volume. The hiding refugees had not realized they were so near the fighting front until this noisy evidence of proximity burst upon them.

There had been comparative quiet for several weeks. The boches had made their grand effort to break through the French line in the vicinity of Chateau Thierry. At this place it had seemed as if they were about to effect their purpose until two divisions of American Marines were brought up to relieve the French. Then the enemy was forced to a standstill, beyond which he was unable thereafter to advance a foot.

Of all this the fugitives knew nothing, and their knowledge of succeeding developments was quite as limited, save for the indications of sound or silence from the battle area. When finally the unmistakable evidence of another big battle reached their ears, they were quar-

tered in several buildings in the business section of a town a few miles from the boche rear lines. They had selected these buildings with a view to their special serviceability because of facilities for concealment, intercommunication and defense or escape in case of attack.

There was no need of a crier to announce the long awaited event when finally it came. Everybody was on the alert almost in an instant. All day the roar of battle continued without abatement, but the hidden fugitives had no way to determine how it was going. At dusk several scouts were sent on ahead to reconnoiter, but they were unable to obtain any information of definite character except that, it appeared, the enemy had launched a new drive against the Allies in the "great bend."

The battle continued with unabating fury the next day and the next and the next. Finally two French soldiers, who said they were well acquainted with the vicinity and who spoke German fluently, donned enemy uniforms that they had taken from the bodies of slain boches, and set out under cover of the darkness to learn what was the situation.

"The battle of Chateau Thierry is being fought and it is being won by American Marines," they reported on their return after several hours' absence.

"Marines!" was the exclamation uttered by every American that received this message. They had not known that two divisions of fellow Sea Soldiers had stopped the enemy advance on Paris at this point more than a month before and, backed up with reinforcements, were now given the task of driving back the enemy in a sector where other veteran allied troops had failed.

For several days more they continued in hiding and fared pretty well meanwhile, all things considered. They managed to gather food enough, such as it was, to keep soul and body together without any "internal quarrel," and they also gathered in a good supply of arms from the strewn battlefields of the vicinity; so that, emboldened by numbers and reports of successes of their friends on the other side of No Man's Land, they felt like attacking a whole boche army in the rear.

Then at last came the announcement from scouts that the enemy was being driven back, slowly, it is true, but surely, and after this information reached them, it was not long before visual evidence of the retreat loomed before them over the western horizon.

This was followed by a tense waiting of several hours; then the boche soldiers began to pour into the ruined town.

"They'll make a stand here, no doubt," Phil remarked to several of his comrades; "and that means we'll have to begin to get busy before very long. The Allies no doubt will train their heavy guns on this place, and we'll get our share of the shelling. What we want to do is to spring a surprise on the enemy that will create consternation among them and make them think an attacking army has dropped out of the clouds on top of them."

It was ticklish business, this waiting for the psychological moment which might be wiped out of future possibility almost any instant by the dropping of a few bombs that would heap masses of debris on top of them and convert their refuge into a tomb. Then suddenly Phil hit on a scheme that probably proved their salvation.

The two French scouts who had brought back information regarding the success of the Americans at Chateau Thierry were sent out again after they had volunteered for this second service planned by Sergeant Speed. How they accomplished their mission is subject almost for another book, for theirs was clever work, indeed. But they were aided materially by the confusion of the boches resulting from their recent defeat and the necessity for quick preparations for a new defense.

These two Frenchmen, Rene La Ferre and Pierre Balsot, made their way in Prussian uniforms through the newly forming enemy front and offered themselves as prisoners to a squad of Yanks who had just raided a machine-gun nest and were about to return to their own lines. They were hurried to headquarters, where they told their story. Their description of the location of the hiding place of the fugitive was so accurate that the American artillery was able to blow up the rest of the town without materially damaging the refuge of the 240 United States Marines and Frenchmen.

Still there remained a considerable force of the enemy machine gunners, riflemen and bomb throwers behind breastworks afforded by the ruins, and it was decided to dislodge these with a move planned by Phil and his comrades and communicated to the American command through the two French messengers.

After the village had been thoroughly wrecked by the artillery, the bombardment ceased and a charge on the town was made by hundreds of Marines, who ran forward in extended order to minimize the deadly effects of the sweeping machine-gun fire of the enemy. This was a signal for the escaped prisoners to dash forth from their places of concealment.

CHAPTER XXXII

MR. BOA AGAIN

IT was one of the most rapid motion-picture affairs ever staged in real or cinematic life. What film enthusiast would not have given every other opportunity he might hope for in after years for this one?

The Yanks and the poilus poured out of those buildings like an army—at least so it must have seemed to their astonished foes. All of them were armed with rifles, most of which had been picked up on the battlefield, and were well drilled and officered, for Phil had looked after this important factor while they were in hiding.

Far more rapidly than the narrative can be told, they charged in squads, routing out stronghold after stronghold, gun nest after gun nest. The boches did not know what to make of it, and their panic grew like a prairie fire. They had no way to tell how many they had to face or from what source they had sprung. The situation was almost ghostly in its aspect of mystery. Consternation presently seized the entire enemy force in this section and the

helter-skelter race that followed in a mad effort to escape from something like a phantom foe sprung suddenly out of the ground was laughable in spite of the carnage with which it was associated.

Near the end of the fight Phil found himself face to face with a ponderous antagonist whom he was not slow to recognize. He cornered the fellow in a street from which exit was blocked, or greatly impeded, by heaps of debris. Mr. Boche then turned, at bay, with clubbed gun, missed his swing, the weapon flew out of his hands and Phil had the late commander of the "underwear squad" of Belleau Wood at his mercy. It was "Mr. Boaconstrictor" of the large girth, "Count Topoff," the so-called "general in disguise," who wore the insignia of a Prussian second lieutenant.

"You'd better surrender," Phil advised with a grim grin. "My bayonet maybe wouldn't reach clear through you, and your royal family would be forever disgraced."

Undoubtedly Phil would have succeeded in making a prisoner of his antagonist if one of those fortunes, or misfortunes, of war that always are beyond the control of even the most heroic had not intervened. A pillar-like remnant of a brick wall about fifteen feet away, probably shaken by some flying missile of the

fight, toppled over, and a shower of masonry struck Phil on the head.

If it had not been for the helmet he had picked up several days before and preserved for such an occasion as this, he probably would have been seriously, if not fatally, injured. But in spite of the protection, the shock was sufficient to knock him over. Still he was not utterly incapacitated for further action, and he staggered to his feet, gripping his gun and attempting to recover his battling equilibrium.

But he was dazed, and his every effort was a wavering struggle. He saw his recent antagonist bearing down upon him and tried his best to steel himself for the meeting, but although armed and his assailant unarmed, his chances were hopeless. He was like a drunken man attempting to stab a piece of cheese with a table-fork.

"Mr. Boa," the titled boche, brushed the bayonet aside like a reed in his path and gripped the boy's left arm with his powerful right hand. In spite of his odd proportions, the fellow evidently had his share of physical strength. Phil tried to twist himself loose, but his efforts were of no avail. He must recover from the effects of the shock of the fallen masonry before he could hope to resist an assailant of half his ordinary strength.

"Count Topoff" held the boy with one hand, and with the other wrenched away his gun. This was rendered the more easy of performance by a feeling of nausea that seized Phil and took away most of his remaining strength.

"Methinks that we have met before this time."

If Phil had not been in his present condition of physical weakness, undoubtedly he would have observed with interest this evidence of a knowledge of English on the part of his captor. But it did occur to him with a sort of hazy giddiness that undoubtedly the fellow had understood his comment on the insufficient length of a bayonet to reach through the diameter of his girth. He was in just the condition of mind on the moment to face death with a sense of sickly humor.

"I suppose he'll be taking a short cut measurement of my girth with a bayonet pretty soon if I don't come to pretty quick," was one of the ideas that whirled through the boy's mind like a buzz-saw. "But he's disposed to play with me a little, I take it from the kind of English he uses. Or is it because he got his knowledge of English by the study of stilted poetry at Heidelberg?"

"You played a nice trick on me and some of my comrades at Belleau Wood, didn't you?"

the boche of odd proportions continued. "Now what do you think I ought to do with you?"

"You ought to be very careful what you do," Phil replied with a fair degree of energy, for the nausea was leaving him, although a severe headache was setting in. "Remember that you are surrounded now by my friends and if you take advantage of your temporary power over me, they'll see to it that I'm fully avenged."

"Oh, that isn't bothering me," returned "Count Topoff" with a wave of disgust. "What I'm thinking about is this: I can kill you very easily right now with your own bayonet. But suppose I spare your life—will you help me to escape?"

"How can I help you escape?" Phil inquired wonderingly. "I wouldn't have charge of you as a prisoner. I don't want to promise to help you, and then fall down on my promise."

"Oh, I'll figure out a way, never fear," was the "count's" answer. "All I want is your promise—but, hello, maybe I won't need your help if I can hail this passing ship. Come on, I'm going to kidnap you on a tank."

Before this speech was finished, Phil had observed the source of his captor's new interest. It was indeed a tank, a very large one, of a design known to be peculiar to boche con-

struction. It came crunching, rattle-blasting, "caterpillaring" along right toward them.

Topoff led his prisoner directly in front of the huge engine of war and stood there waving one hand as if signaling it to stop. Phil hardly expected the hail to receive any response, even though it came from a "kamerad" who was easily recognized by his uniform, but it did. The tank stopped within a few feet of them, a side door was thrown open and a man called out something in German to Phil's captor.

The prisoner did not understand what was said, but it was evident that the man in the tank recognized Topoff. Presently the latter said to his prisoner:

"Go in there, quick, or I'll run this bayonet through you. Hurry up now; I won't stand any fooling. My opportunity to escape and take you along has arrived. Get in quick."

Phil obeyed and the ponderous boche followed into the ponderous machine. A moment or two later the tank was in motion again.

CHAPTER XXXIII

TANKS AND "WATER CURE"

PHIL had never before seen the inside of a tank, and in spite of the uncomfortable situation in which he now found himself, his first impulse was to look about him and see what sort of affair a "land battleship" might be.

But he was not given much opportunity for an undisturbed inspection of the interior of the huge war engine at this time. Almost immediately after the metal door was closed, events began to take place with much greater volume and intensity than at any time during the machine guns and infantry battle amid the ruins of the town. Apparently, this tank had just arrived on the scene of the fight and, finding the battle going hopelessly against the boches, turned and fled. But the reason for the flight did not spring from any menace of infantry or machine guns. The big war engine might have cleaned up a whole army of such comparative pygmies and toys. It was the advance of half a dozen British tanks into the fight that caused the crew of the "land

battleship" to see the unwisdom of tarrying on the field of the already lost battle and to turn about and seek safety in flight.

Phil was unable to see much outside. All the portholes were occupied by members of the crew who manned the guns or handled the driving and steering apparatus. Now and then he was able to get a narrow peek through one of these ports, but with little satisfaction. The evidence of the new turn of events since his capture came to his ears from without and to his eyes within the car.

The firing of what seemed to be a battery of heavy guns apprised him of the approach of a "fleet" of British tanks. The din of the firing of the guns of the huge war engine in which he was imprisoned and of the attacking tanks was terrific. It seemed as if some of the shells that struck the armor plate of the fleeing machine must surely pierce it through and explode inside the car.

Up and down over the heaps of debris went the big "land ship," and after it came the pursuing "caterpillar batteries." Phil watched the contest with every sense of perception on the alert. The inside of the boche tank was illuminated principally with electric bulbs, for little light came in through the portholes. Five men, a driver, a mechanician, and

three gunners, constituted the crew. The driver sat on a low cushioned seat in the forward part of the car. About him, and within easy reach, were the controlling apparatus, directing lever, clutch and brake pedals, gear lever and steering clutch. Behind him was the starting crank, and behind this were the radiator, ventilator, fuel tank and motor.

Every member of the crew was desperately busy with his own duties in connection with the operation of the war engine and its battery. The driver looked straight ahead as if he hoped to pull the tank along at greater speed by fastening his gaze on a distant object; the gunners sat in their hammock-like seats that swung easily back and forth and from side to side to suit the will of the occupants as they loaded and fired; and the mechanician was busy most of the time with an oil can, the nozzle of which he poked into more holes and cups than a layman would have imagined to exist in a machine several times the size of this one.

Phil had no technical knowledge of artillery, but he saw at once that the battery of this tank was heavy and of very destructive character. The three pieces sent forth their murderous messages almost as rapidly, it seemed, as the

fire of a machine gun. One of the gunners sat up in a revolving turret, while the other two were in swinging "half-turrets" at both sides.

"Count Topoff" forced his prisoner into a sitting position on what appeared to be a closed tool-chest near the starting crank and then sat down beside him. There they waited and watched and listened, both strung to the highest tension of eagerness, apprehension, expectancy.

Phil, of course, longed for victory to crown the efforts of the pursuing tanks, and yet he had to admit to himself that probably his own safety depended upon the escape of his captors. Their defeat could be effected only by crippling the caterpillar tread, or "chain-feet," or by exploding shells in the machinery. The former was difficult to do because of the peculiar construction of the treads with many slanting surface-sections, and about the only kind of shell that could be thrown into the machinery was an explosive bullet about two inches in diameter, specially made to pierce armor plate.

Phil had no sure way of determining how near the British tanks approached to the fleeing boche engine, but he inferred from the sound of their guns that it would require a long and continued peppering away to put the

big enemy tank out of business. He suspected, too, that this land-dreadnaught carried at least one anti-tank rifle capable of firing high power explosives through the armor of the attacking "fleet." He gathered this suspicion from the one grim and gleeful remark that "the count" screamed into his ear "between shots":

"We've knocked two of them out already, and we'll fix all the rest the same way if they don't keep a slanting front to that gimlet-twist up there."

Phil was unable to figure out how Topoff could determine the number of British tanks that had been put out of commission, if indeed any had suffered such disaster, but he now observed for the first time the smaller gun alongside the heavy shell-piece in the revolving turret. He also watched the gunner in the turret more closely and before long he understood clearly that the fellow was constantly on the alert for an opening for an effective shot with the smaller piece.

The battle continued thus for half an hour, but the British tanks seemed to be unable to stop the big boche battler. At last the firing ceased.

"What's happened?" Phil ventured to inquire of the boche of big circumference.

"It's all over and we've won, as we always will do," was the latter's answer. "It was a stern chase for your British friends and we've sunk half their fleet and peppered the sails of the rest of them so full of holes that they won't hold a cupful of wind."

"I'll admit you've got a good pair of sea legs and ran a good race for a tank, but I'd like to know how you can tell what your gunners did without being able to see much farther than the end of your nose," Phil returned skeptically.

"Ah," said the other with an air of deep mystery; "that remark demonstrates one of the great failings of you Americans. You can't understand the superior intelligence of the race you are foolishly trying to whip. But you are going to wake up before long."

"What is going to wake us up?" Phil inquired curiously. His curiosity, however, was directed more at the personal puzzle in "the count" than the information "the count" might be able to communicate.

"Water," replied the "war prophet."

Phil looked at his captor a little more keenly, wondering if, after all, this supposed relative of the kaiser were not a little off in his "turret."

"Maybe he thinks he has an anti-tank gun

in his head and has just fired an explosive bullet into me," the boy mused. "My! what a wise squint he has in his eyes."

"How is water going to wake us up?" Phil asked after a few moments' silent contemplation of the strange fellow on the box beside him.

"How?" repeated the latter, looking his prisoner hard in the face. "Don't you know what'll wake a sleeping man up quicker than anything else?"

"No," replied Phil calmly, but with a well-mimicked open-mouthed ingenuousness. "What will wake a sleeping man up quicker than anything else?"

"Throw a pail of water on him," said Topoff.

"Well?" Phil queried with sustained simple-mindedness.

"Well!" roared "the count" with voluminous contempt; "I believe you're just fool enough to think that's the way we're going to wake you up."

"Isn't it?" Phil asked, provokingly.

"No!" the boche officer bellowed, and the boy began to fear he had carried the matter too far. Perhaps even now an attack of insane violence could not be averted.

"No," repeated "the count," his face be-

coming flushed with crimson hate; "we're going to push you all, Americans, English, French, Belgians, into the Atlantic Ocean; then you'll wake up."

CHAPTER XXXIV

FROM TANK TO LIMOUSINE

THE big tank was still laboring along with the retreating boche army, although no more shells were being hurled at her. The defeat and rout effected by the dash and daring of the "devil-hound" Marines had been complete and this powerful "dreadnaught," although uninjured by the score or more of shells that struck her, evidently was unfitted to fight a finish fight with the "fleet of land cruisers" of the enemy, in the opinion of her crew.

The engine made a good deal of noise as the huge war machine "caterpillared" along, and Phil and "the count" had to lift their voices to high pitch in order to be understood during their conversation. Although the battle had resulted in disaster for the kaiser's army, still the "titled Topoff" appeared to gloat with satisfaction over such phases of the engagement as could be shown to have an element of glory for the boches. He seemed to have no eye, ear, taste, or smell of appreciation for anything that suggested defeat for his soldier comrades.

"He's awfully conceited, but not such a fool as I thought he was," Phil mused during a lapse of the conversation. "That was a fairly clever joke he put over on me about the water-cure, but I don't believe he saw the joke himself. He seems to take himself seriously even when he says something funny."

Fifteen or twenty minutes after the finish of the battle, the tank came to a standstill, and the door in the right side was opened. Topoff then ordered his prisoner to get out and followed close at his heels. Outside the tank, "the count" seized the boy's arm with one hand and led him along—whither, Phil was curious to know.

The defeated army had retreated to a new line and dropped into a series of trenches undoubtedly occupied by them, or the French, during an earlier stage of the big boche offensive. The most feverish activity marked the scene, which extended north and south as far as eye could see and east and west for a depth of about half a mile. The country consisted of a succession of rolling hills, but Phil was able to command a good view of proceedings from the eminence on which he stood. The trenches had suffered considerably from shell explosions and rainy weather since their last condition of serviceability, and consequently

there was much to do now to get them back into the most comfortable shape possible.

All this Phil gleaned with little more than a sweep of the eye, for he was not left in leisurely contemplation of the scene more than a minute or two. He was suddenly aroused from his spell of enchantment by a new order from "Mr. Boaconstrictor."

"Come on," said the latter; "no time to waste."

Phil accompanied his captor to the foot of the hill behind the front line trench, and there "the count" held a short consultation with a superior officer. They conversed in German, and the prisoner was unable to understand much that they said. However, he did glean this from several disgruntled remarks: that very few prisoners had been taken in the recent engagement, due, no doubt, to the boches' heavy defeat, and there seemed to be no others in the vicinity to corral with Phil.

"Am I the only prisoner in the hands of these badly defeated boches in this sector?" the boy mused. "I feel very much honored, also considerably ashamed of myself. Well, it's some consolation to realize that I wouldn't be here if a side of a house hadn't fallen on top o' me."

A peculiar circumstance in this interview

struck Phil so forcibly that the impression remained with him almost constantly as long as the mystery surrounding "Count Boaconstrictor Topoff" was unexplained. This was the manifest attention and deference shown the oddly shaped lieutenant by the superior officer, whose insignia indicated that he bore the rank of major.

"I can't understand it," Phil mused with a puzzled confusion. "From the way everybody bows and scrapes before him, one might think he's the kaiser himself. The officers all seem to know him at sight, and if it weren't contrary to military form, I believe they'd bend before him in the middle like jackknives. He must be something more than a count. Maybe I ought to feel honored at being his prisoner."

The interview developed remarkable characteristics more and more as it progressed. "The count" became more and more demonstrative and finally was giving unmistakable orders to the major, who apparently acquiesced to everything the second lieutenant said. Finally the subservient superior officer scribbled a few words on a bit of paper and delivered it to an orderly with instruction as to what to do with it.

The orderly jumped onto a motorcycle and dashed away on his errand. Phil did not watch

him after his departure, as he would have done if he had suspected that the note had any bearing on what was to be done with him as a prisoner of war. He was considerably surprised when, a few minutes later, the messenger returned, followed by an automobile driven by a soldier in uniform. It was a large closed limousine, hardly the kind one would expect to see on a battlefield.

"Pile in," ordered Topoff, taking hold of his prisoner's arm and half dragging him toward the machine.

Phil obeyed the order literally. He was so astonished he could do nothing with any degree of grace. He "piled into" the automobile and stumbled and fell onto the rear seat. "Mr. Boa" also squeezed into the car and sat down beside the boy, taking up so much room that he pushed the Yank against the upholstered side hard enough to render breathing difficult. Then he gave an order through a speaking tube to the driver, and they were whirled away to the rear of the Prussian lines.

CHAPTER XXXV

IN A TIGHT PLACE

"WELL, if this doesn't beat any adventure ever had outside the Arabian Nights, I'll eat a Zeppelin alive," Phil mused with all the pep of an ejaculation. "If somebody doesn't clear up the mystery of this amorphous monster of a man pretty soon, I'll bu'st."

It surely was a confusing situation, with a puzzling personality to add to the bewilderment. Phil would gladly have dismissed the subject from his mind if such thing had been possible, but he soon found this out of the question, so he attempted to quiet his nerves by venturing a conversation with his captor. He decided to make this attempt by an appeal to the unmistakable vanity of "the count."

"May I ask you how it happens that you speak the American language so well?" he inquired.

Topoff turned quickly toward the boy and fired back at him in his usual high-pitched tone of voice:

"May I ask you why you call it the American language instead of the English?"

"I suppose I may as well tell you the truth," Phil answered, somewhat crestfallen. "I thought I'd be more likely to get an answer out of you if I steered clear of that word English. I understand you people hate the English worse than anything else in the world."

"Right you are, boy, right you are," was the vehement reply of the big boche. "I hate them worse than poison, as does every other true subject of the kaiser. That was good diplomacy on your part, but it didn't work on me, did it? Did you see how quickly I called you for it?"

"Yes, I did, and I'm not going to try anything on you again. But may I repeat my question? You speak the best of English, and your accent is perfect. How did you do it?"

"That isn't the only mystery about me that is puzzling you, is it?" returned Topoff sharply.

"No, it isn't," Phil admitted frankly. "You're by far the most mysterious man I ever met. I could sit here and fire questions at you all day, seeking an explanation of this and that."

"Your first question is very simple," answered the boche officer, swelling with pride and almost crushing the boy against the side

of the car. "I studied in both England and America, also in France. I speak French just as well as English."

"I must admit that you studied well," Phil observed genuinely enough, yet with the view of winning the fellow's favor by an appeal to his vanity.

"I didn't do much studying at all," Topoff flashed back. "Learning always came easy to me."

He "swelled" his prisoner still harder against the well padded upholstering, so that the latter was scarcely able to restrain an outcry of pain. After the puff of pride had relaxed, the boy said to himself:

"This is the most monumental exhibition of conceit I ever saw in my life. But I must keep him going, in spite of the habit he has of swelling up like a gas bag every time I tickle his vanity. Maybe I can get used to these tight quarters. I wonder how long this journey is going to last."

By this time they had passed the rear line trenches and were speeding past a company of artillerymen who were busy emplacing and camouflaging their field pieces in a bushy hollow. The automobile was tearing along at high speed, and in a short time they had left behind the fighting belt of trenches and ordnance and

were traversing a broad territory of supply stations and relief and reinforcement camps.

Phil now found himself almost forced to resort to methods that he did not like, and, yet, the situation was in a considerable degree amusing. In order to bring about a condition that might prove favorable to himself, he saw that he must continue to play on his captor's vanity. But it was a problem how to do this successfully. This ungainly and vainglorious anomaly of military officialdom was certainly a queer offshoot of humanity, but not a fool in all respects, according to a conclusion reached by Phil in more simple language.

"I don't believe he'd fall for flat flattery," the boy mused; "but I believe I can get him going if I work it right. It makes me feel kind o' small to engage in such business, but that's one of the penalties of war, and we all have to be victims of some sort. There's one thing I'd like to find out above everything else, and that is how he manages to violate every principle of military authority and get away with it. If I could get an answer to that question, perhaps I could find out what he's going to do with me and perhaps prevail on him to go slow on any rough stuff he may have in mind. It's just possible he's bent on revenge for the indignity I heaped on him at Belleau Wood. Well, here

goes for a try anyway at some—some—suggestive flattery; yes, that's a good name for it—suggestive flattery—to make him swell out so big, horizontally, that I'll be pushed—right—through—yes, right through—happy thought!—the side of this limousine and escape. Oh!"

Phil did not, of course, utter this "exclamation" aloud, but he gave a sudden start that aroused the curiosity of "the count" quite as thoroughly as if he had expressed aloud the eagerness in his mind with the interjection that he succeeded in holding behind his lips.

"It's the very idea I've been waiting for ever since I fell into this fellow's hands," Phil told himself, returning the curious look of his captor with another of naive innocence. "If this doesn't work, I may as well jump into the first river we come to."

CHAPTER XXXVI

SUGGESTIVE FLATTERY

"DO you know," said Phil, with a manner of meditative musing, "you remind me of something that has caused a good deal of comment all over America on a number of occasions?"

The prisoner stopped to observe the effect of his question, but not with the expectation of receiving an answer. The query was of a rhetorical character hardly calling for more of a return than a manifestation of interest. However, the effect on "Count Topoff's" vanity moved him to answer in as matter-of-fact a manner as if he were being quizzed on a problem in arithmetic.

"No, indeed," he said. "Is that so? How is it that I remind you of such a thing?"

"Now, I've got to appeal to his intelligence as well as to his vanity," the flattery plotter mused. "I mustn't fall down on this. I must handle it so that he can't help reading glory for himself between every two words."

He hesitated several moments, really for the purpose of phrasing his ideas, although he

attempted to resume an impressive attitude of meditation. Then he said:

"Every now and then in America, we hear of a son of some multi-millionaire starting at the bottom of some business in order to learn it from the ground up. He sometimes dons overalls and enters the shops of a foundry or other mechanical plant. He puts himself on a level with the man who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow, in order that when he reaches the top—maybe president of the company—there may be no element of the business that he won't understand."

Phil paused for time to consider how next to proceed. He figured also that his captor might interpose a remark of some sort that would aid him in the development of his vanity trap. But the looked-for remark proved to be more confusing than helpful.

"Boy," said "the count", with seeming irrelevance and casting a sharp glance at his prisoner; "have you any idea whose car you're riding in?"

"No," Phil replied quickly; "unless it's yours."

"It belongs to the emperor of Germany," was the rather startling announcement.

The boy was silent for some moments. He was in doubt at first whether to believe "the

count's" statement or to regard it as a bit of frivolous fiction. Then he decided it was best to appear, at least, to accept it as worthy of his credence.

"Is that so?" he said with affected eagerness of interest. "I'll have something big to tell my friends when I get back home—that I rode in the kaiser's car."

"That is, if you ever get back home," interposed "the count."

"To be sure," Phil agreed quickly. "The fortunes of war are very uncertain."

"Yes, in most wars; but in this war the fortunes and misfortunes are absolutely fixed and have been fixed ever since it started," said Topoff, with unpleasant insinuation in his tone of voice. "I suppose you know how this war is going to result."

"No, I can't say that I do. Can you tell me how it's going to result?"

"Certainly. It's going to result in complete victory for the central allies. You ought to have been able to answer that question."

"I suppose so," Phil returned slowly. "But the question that now interests me most is, what is going to become of me in the meantime?"

"What do you think ought to become of you?"

"It isn't a question of oughtness. I imagine it's a question of your own disposition. I seem to be your personal prisoner."

"We've been rambling a good deal in our conversation," said Topoff. "Let's go back and pick up the broken threads and tie them together. Now, did you understand why I told you who owned this car?"

"No," Phil replied.

"The reason is very simple. You had been comparing me with the sons of wealthy men who enter shops to learn, from the ground up, the business they propose to follow. Well, you weren't very far off in your comparison. I've been doing the same thing in military life. That's why you've seen me fighting shoulder to shoulder with privates in the front ranks, although I can give orders to captains, colonels, majors and generals. If I can command the use of one of the emperor's automobiles, it's reasonable to believe that I belong pretty high up, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," the Marine sergeant answered. "I would assume that you must be related to the kaiser. Is it a fact that you are a cousin of his and that you are known as Count Topoff?"

"Where did you ever learn that?" "the

count" demanded, gazing sharply at his youthful prisoner.

Phil shuddered apprehensively at the almost threatening manner of his captor. Was he, indeed, in possession of a secret regarding "Mr. Boaconstrictor's" identity which was supposed to be known to only a favored and responsible few?

"You'd better explain how you got that information," declared "the count" with menacing coldness; "and you'll have to make your explanation very clear and straightforward if you escape a firing squad. It looks very much to me as if you are a spy."

CHAPTER XXXVII

A USELESS ARGUMENT

"I'VE got to go the limit now in flattering this man's vanity," was the conclusion that flashed through Phil's mind as he listened to his captor's coldly worded spy-suspicion. "And I've got to work fast, too."

Then he addressed the occupant of more than two-thirds of the seat as follows:

"Let me subject myself to a test under your detective microscope, if you please. I must tell my story rapidly, so that you cannot accuse me of taking time to think it up. If I tell the truth so that you can't puncture it with any reasonable doubt, will you assume that I am not a spy until there is some evidence tending to prove that I am one?"

"Of course," replied Topoff with high-pitched, cutting tone peculiar to him. Every time it rasped into Phil's ear it gave him "apprehensive creeps," but the situation was desperate now, and the boy decided to disregard it.

"You have recognized me, I take it, as the American soldier who engaged in a rather spec-

tacular contest with a squad under your command in Belleau Wood a few weeks ago," Phil continued.

Topoff nodded with another affirmative squeak.

"Did you know that I was in that bunch of prisoners that you started to take back to your nearest railroad communication?—I presume that was where you were taking us?"

"You bet I knew it," "the count" answered with a nod of significance, which indicated that the author of the "novel disarmament" of the boches in the wooded ravine had not been forgotten.

"Well, I was one of the fellows that engineered our escape," Phil continued. "But I didn't get the information myself about your identity. One of the other fellows who understood German overheard your conversation with Hertz down in the sandpit and told us all about it. Naturally we didn't want to be blown to atoms with bombs dropped from Hertz's aeroplane; so we decided to seek more healthful quarters. That's all there is to it. Now, have I proved to your satisfaction that I'm not a spy?"

"No, you haven't proved anything," Topoff answered with a sneering look at his prisoner, "until you explain how you managed to hide

a company of soldiers right in our midst ready to spring out and attack us in a manner that nobody in the wide world would ever think possible. If it hadn't been for your little handful of men, we'd 'ave held the American army and would now be driving them back. Can you guess now what I'm going to do with you?"

"No," Phil replied eagerly, but not without some apprehension.

"I'm going to put you through a 'sweating' process that will make the worst 'sweating' given a suspected criminal in the Tower of London look like a royal reception to the crown prince," announced "Count Topoff" with some more of his villainous sharpness of voice. "You're going to have an experience that will make you remember your uninvited visit to Europe away beyond the River Jordan or the River Styx, wherever you go after you give up the ghost."

"But we were invited here," Phil answered, with a chill of apprehension that his vanity plot was doomed to failure.

"You invited yourselves here," piped the big fellow, with an angry swelling of his form decidedly uncomfortable to the boy beside him. "Any other statement from you is a lie."

Phil ached to give the blustering boche a sharp answer about submarines and the torture

of women and children, but he wisely restrained the impulse.

"I think I can answer right now any questions you may put to me to settle your suspicion about my being a spy," he said resolutely. "You'd better put the question to me now before I have time to think up a story. If I hesitate, you'll know you've caught me; if I tell a clear, well-connected and rapid story, you ought to give me credit of telling the truth."

"No," insisted "the count," whose constitutional brutality seemed to be showing itself more and more on the surface; "you had an opportunity to go on with your story without waiting for any more questions. You've been hesitating and talking about other things for several minutes in order to take time to think up an answer to the last question I put to you. When I told you you'd have to explain how you managed to hide a company of soldiers right inside our lines and near the battle front ready to spring out and throw our forces into confusion, why didn't you answer right away?"

"Because you stopped me by putting another question," Phil replied without hesitation. "You asked me if I could guess what you were going to do with me."

"And you took that as an excuse to delay

answering the other question. You think you're very sharp, don't you?"

"I can answer that question in a very reasonable way," Phil insisted. "It's the only explanation any living man could give. You can't, with all your experience, conceive of another intelligent explanation. The so-called company that I was with consisted of only the soldiers who escaped from the guard under your command a few weeks ago. We hid in the daytime and traveled at night, creeping nearer and nearer to the front. At last we got as near as we thought safe and hid ourselves in dark buildings and basements and waited for the American drive at Chateau Thierry. When it came and your soldiers were pushed back to the point where we were hidden, we jumped out and made our attack."

"Too thin, too thin, my boy," declared Topoff with a sneer. "I thought you'd cook up some such story."

"Keep up your 'sweating' process," Phil insisted. "Don't give me any time to think up anything more. Fire your questions at me like a machine gun. Surely with your keenness of mind you can catch me if I've been lying."

"No, no, nothing more now," returned Topoff with a doggedness of manner and a glitter of hate in his eyes. "I haven't begun to 'sweat'

you yet. You see, I didn't bring any 'sweating' machinery along."

His eyes fairly bulged with bestial cruelty as he made this announcement with an implied promise of torture that caused a succession of shudders to shake the boy's frame in spite of his efforts to resist and control the panic attack that he felt coming.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

WHAT THE LIGHTNING REVEALED

"SWEATING machinery! What is it?" This question rang in Phil's brain during all the rest of the drive. Under the play of his stimulated imagination it became a nightmare transferred into an atmosphere of reality. There was no point in the progress of the continuous tragic dread where he could say to himself, even as one might say in his sleep: "Oh, this is only a dream."

Who was this more-than-ever mysterious man? What was the explanation of his anomalous position and his tyrannical manner?

That he was a man of power and authority could no longer be doubted. Phil had at first been inclined to regard this blustering trip-voiced misfit of a soldier as an unaccountable joke, but he was fully convinced now that his judgment was decidedly in error in this respect.

On, on they went in a general north-easterly direction. They passed over a crudely repaired bridge that spanned the River Aisne, though Phil did not know at the time what stream it was. They dashed along deep rutted

thoroughfares, which engineering crews were trying vainly to keep in smooth-surfaced repair; they passed miles of truck caravans and marching soldiers, also numerous supply stations, around which were usually camped large bodies of soldiers held in reserve to be placed here and there on the battle front as needed. Before long, however, the long lines of moving camions ceased to appear, and the boy concluded that this was an indication that the captured French railroads had been put back into operation up to this point.

Most of the towns that they passed through were in states of partial or total ruin. The greater portion of the inhabitants of the entire country apparently had moved ahead of the boche advance as refugees, or had been transported into the enemy's country to labor there, while men, women and children of bocheland fought or prepared supplies for the fighters.

Much of this, however, Phil saw in the dusk of evening, for they had not traveled more than two or three hours when the sun began to sink below the western horizon. On, on, they went, through the gathering gloom, then through the thickening darkness. Although they passed a number of military stations where food might have been obtained for the asking, they did not stop for supper. On, on, on, into the night

they continued their course, how late the prisoner could only conjecture from his own weariness and hunger.

But at last the journey came to an end, as all journeys do. It had produced a good many surprises for Phil, nor was the least of these the one that met him at the finish.

Hardly an area of any considerable size in the course of the drive had the prisoner observed that did not bear some evidence of battle devastation. This condition was evident even in the latter part of the journey, which was in the darkness of the early half of the night. They passed close to the ruins of many houses and other buildings, and found it neccessary to drive slower after sunset in order to avoid "turning turtle" in the numerous shell holes of the road, which had been repaired with great haste and imperfection in those parts of the invaded country where the railroads remained in operation.

Moreover, an hour or two before they reached the end of their journey, the sky became heavily clouded and much rain fell. This made it necessary to drive with even greater care, so that the rate at which they covered the ground during this dark and rainy period was little more than a creep, as compared with the speed maintained in the hours of daylight.

Phil was able to see but little of his surroundings for a time, except directly in front of the machine, as they neared their place of destination. The storm had abated somewhat, but the sky had not cleared, and the darkness was just as intense as ever. Then suddenly the storm burst anew with a heavier downpour than at any time since the rain began to fall, and the lightning, which had flashed with indifferent illumination, blazed forth with great brilliance and frequency.

By the aid of this light, Phil saw that they were entering a drive that ran through a woods of considerable size. Phil was interested as well as awed by this new development. The surroundings were not at all cheerful, especially in view of the circumstances, but the situation was decidedly impressive nevertheless.

"If I were back in my fairy-story days, I'd imagine that I'm being carried captive into an ogre's den," the boy half-muttered to himself after they had ridden several minutes along the drive. "Hello!" he almost exclaimed a minute later. "Here's the ogre's castle, all right."

There was good cause for this play of grewsome imagination. It was revealed by a specially brilliant flash of lightning that lighted

the surroundings like day. Before them in a comparatively small clearing was a magnificent structure of mediaeval mass, lines and turrets. To a tourist it would have been greeted with rapturous recollections of a romantic past; to Phil it was a picture of apprehension of horror.

CHAPTER XXXIX

"THE CASTLE OF THE HUMAN SNAKE"

THE driver had driven the car under a large and heavily pillared shelter at one side of the chateau, and he now honked his horn, evidently as a signal to someone inside. Presently a burly Prussian servant came out, carrying a powerful hand searchlight, with which he supplemented the front lights of the automobile. The rain continued to come down in torrents and the lightning to flash and the thunder to clap heavily. However, the travelers were well protected under the shelter, so that there was no need to hurry inside.

Phil would have broken loose and made a dash into the uncomfortable storm and the pitch-dark forest if there had been any opportunity for him to do so. But, evidently, "the count" anticipated that he might attempt such a move and kept a firm hold on one arm of his prisoner. The servant also, well schooled in his duties, took hold of the other arm of the boy, who was thus led through a massive entrance into the building.

It was a dingy looking place into which Phil

was conducted. Undoubtedly this appearance was a result of two principal conditions, for, with quite as little doubt, this chateau had been kept in excellent condition before the war. First, the light was poor, being supplied principally with oil lamps and candles. The electric flash-light, in the hands of the servant, when switched on, caused the other lights to fade into insignificance. Second, the number of servants available for the maintenance of so large an establishment must have been small indeed.

But an unmistakable atmosphere of luxury, in spite of its mustiness, almost blew into Phil's face as he entered. A breath of rich tapestries and soft velvety rugs met in sharp contrast the gust of wet-woods wind that forced itself in past the midnight arrivals. But for this contrast, perhaps the neglected richness of the interior would not have impressed itself so noticeably on the prisoner's olfactory sense.

The room into which Phil was first inducted was a large reception hall, which opened upon two other apartments, one to the left and one straight ahead, through wide high-arched doorways, partly closed with heavy portieres. The boy was led straight forward through the latter doorway and into a large room whose rich decorations and furniture were only vaguely

discernible by the light of two or three candles on a deep mantel over a great fireplace.

Here Topoff gave instructions in German to the servant and left the latter alone to proceed with the prisoner. Phil next found himself being conducted through a long hall and then down a flight of stairs to a basement floor. There he was thrust into a dark room and the door was closed and locked.

It was a most unceremonious proceeding, but Phil decided that he could hardly expect anything else under the circumstances. He forgot for the moment that he was wretchedly hungry, in his eagerness and anxiety to learn the character of his quarters. He began his examination of the place by getting down on his hands and knees. Then he realized for the first time that he was on a floor of cold, hard clay, like that of a deep cellar.

Suddenly his investigation was aided by a brilliant flash of lightning, which afforded him a good view of the floor of his prison. There was nothing of particular interest in it except a board platform at the farther side of the room, probably built there as a dry elevation for vegetables harvested from lands of the estate. No such articles of raw food, however, were on it now.

"That'll be a much better place for me to

sleep on than this pneumonia-and-rheumatism floor," Phil muttered. "I think I'll go over there and try to sleep. I wonder if I can."

He had good reason to doubt his ability to forget his physical and mental distress in slumber, and the effort he made was therefore the more courageous. As he lay down on his back, another flash of lightning illuminated the room, so that he had now a fairly complete picture in his mind as to the size and character of his prison.

It was circular, like a huge cistern, and deep. A curved wall of masonry arose on all sides. Midway between floor and ceiling and far above his reach were two long, narrow, deep windows. The diameter of the cylindrical room was twenty-five or thirty feet.

"A regular donjon, or dungeon, of a mediaeval castle," Phil said to himself. He almost uttered the words aloud, just to satisfy his curiosity as to how his voice would sound, but a dread of the awe-thrill that would probably follow controlled the impulse.

"I'm going to do my best to go to sleep," he resolved. "Goodness knows, I need it bad enough, and maybe this place won't seem so dreadful in the morning. I wonder if they'll give me anything to eat then, or if starvation is a concomitant of that villain's sweating

machinery. Concomitant is a good word under the circumstances, I guess. It ought to go well with a donjon of a castle keep. Just to think! the position 'u'd be reversed and I'd have that monster of big circumference in limbo behind the Marine lines at Chateau Thierry if that tall slim piece of a wall hadn't toppled over on top o' me. But instead of his being under guard at Chateau Thierry, I'm in a cellar tomb in Chateau—Chateau—what'll I call it? Oh, yes, I'll call it Chateau Boaconstrictor, or the Castle of the Human Snake."

His dread of what the near future might have in store for him being thus mollified somewhat by his damp-dungeon serpentine wit, Phil dozed several minutes over the grewsome idea and then fell hungrily asleep.

CHAPTER XL

A ROOM OF TORTURE

PHIL was awakened in the morning by the creaking of his prison door, and opened his eyes to behold the jailer of his midnight imprisonment advancing toward him. He observed now, as he had not noticed when he first saw him, that this fellow wore a military uniform.

With a few words in German and expressive movements of his hands, the jailer indicated to the boy an order to come with him, and the prisoner obeyed. Up the stairs they went and into a very strange room occupied by that very strange man, "Count Topoff." Strewn about in the apartment were a dozen or more remarkable contrivances, a few of which indicated the probable general character of all of them. One was plainly a pillory with holes for the head and the hands, but within the hand holes projected many sharp metal points, while on the stand for the undoubtedly barefooted pilloried victim were a hundred or more sharp metal points projecting upwards. There were also hanging on the wall numerous straps and belts,

some of them crossed and riveted here and there until they bore the appearance of elaborate body-brace or harness, while from various ends hung numerous sharp-toothed jaw-clasps. Overhead, suspended on a pulley by a long rope, was what appeared to be a head harness. The other end of the rope was caught around a cleat over against the wall.

Phil shuddered at the sight. Here was cruelty apparatus of the most fiendish ingenuity. And there could be no doubt that it was intended to be used and that "Count Topoff" was the very fellow to use it with frigid glee.

The prisoner was aroused from his secretly shrinking contemplation of the prospect before him by the voice of "the count," who addressed him in English, thus:

"You see, most foolish American, what is in store for you unless you give me a true explanation of what took place this side of Chateau Thierry. Now, I'll give you one more chance before the course of persuasion begins. By telling me the truth, you can escape all that you see before you."

His voice was more repulsive than it had been at any time before in Phil's hearing. The high-pitched, tripping near-stutter, if the speaker had spoken from a position of concealment, might have caused any hearer to suspect

that the utterances popped forth from the lips of a bully of imp-land.

"But," Phil protested, hopelessly, it is true, "I have already told you the truth. You surely don't want me to fabricate a yarn just to escape your cruelty."

"No," thundered the big fellow. "I want the truth. If you lie, I'll know it at once and something worse will follow. Orderly, knee-splints, toe-thumb."

The direction was given in English, but it evidently was understood. The orderly picked up two pieces of pine board, about three inches wide, an inch thick and a little more than two feet long. These he proceeded to strap to Phil's legs, behind, so that the prisoner was unable to bend his knees. Then he tied a string to each of the boy's thumbs and with the persuasive power of a strong pull drew those digits down against the victim's great toes and tied these two extremities together.

"There," rattled the boche military ogre, as he viewed the plight of his prisoner with evident enjoyment; "when you decide you're ready to tell the truth, send for me."

"I don't know what to tell you besides what I've already told," replied Phil desperately, for the pain of his cramped position was already testing his endurance.

"Think, think hard!" advised "the count" as he left the room.

The orderly also departed, and the victim was left alone in his misery. The latter twisted and squirmed into every possible position to relieve his distress. The strain on his legs, back, thumbs and toes was so uniformly painful that he only increased his misery when he added tension at one point or portion to relieve the others.

Anywhere from ten minutes to half an hour after Topoff and the orderly left, another man in coarse tattered civilian garments appeared, bearing a tray of steaming food. As he set it down before the prisoner, he startled the latter with the following speech, scarcely above a whisper:

"This is not intended for you to eat, only to look at. If you try to eat it, you'll find it full of the hottest of red pepper. By the way, I'm an English spy and want to give you a little advice. Think up some kind of plausible story and tell it to 'the count' in the place of the one he refuses to believe. Grit your teeth, stick through your torment, for help is on the way, I hope. As soon as you think up a story that you think will stand a test of reason, yell to the orderly and tell him that you're ready to give in."

"He can't understand me, can he?" Phil returned.

"Oh, yes, he can understand a good deal, although he pretends to be contemptuously ignorant of the hated English tongue. Good-by, now, I must go, but I'll keep my eyes open and will do everything that I can for you."

The spy glided swiftly out of the room, leaving the tray of food setting on the floor.

Encouraged by the fact of the nearness of a friend and the assurance that there was reasonable hope of rescue, Phil cudgeled his brain hard for an inspiration to think up a plausible story to tell his tormentor. The strain of pain and necessity helped him wonderfully, and in a short time he was yelling at the top of his voice to the orderly. The latter strolled in in leisurely manner after the boy yelled two or three minutes.

"Tell 'the count' I'm ready to tell the truth," Phil announced in pleading tones, which were genuine enough, in spite of the fiction plot behind them.

Without a word the orderly went out of the room and soon returned accompanied by "Count Topoff."

"Ready to tell me the truth?" snapped the latter, addressing the suffering prisoner.

"Yes, yes," cried Phil, designedly making no effort to conceal his distress.

Topoff gave the orderly directions in German, and the latter proceeded to cut the strings that bound the boy's thumbs and great toes together.

CHAPTER XLI

THE "SUBTERRENE"

THE first impression that struck Phil forcibly as "Count Topoff" entered the room was the fact that he had been drinking. This reminded him of the drink-fest that had incapacitated "the count" and his command of guards, in a French inn a few weeks previously, to prevent the prisoners in their charge from turning the tables on them.

"It's probably lucky for me that he was too much under the influence to remember the trick we played on them when we saw to it that every 'drunk' among them was super-drunk," the boy mused after the strain of his torture had been relieved by the cutting of his thumb-toe bonds.

Topoff wasted no time in the carrying out of the portion of his program now due. Although plainly flushed with the liquor he had drunk recently, there was nothing maudlin in his manner, and he had full command of his usual wits.

"Well, go ahead with your yarn," he ordered, sitting down in an armchair ancient

enough in appearance to have belonged to the days of Charlemagne. "But hold on. Do you realize what is going to happen to you if you lie? You're going into that pillory, with your bare feet on those sharp steel points. Now go ahead, but you'd better not talk at all if you're thinking of telling me another string of lies."

Phil's resolution was almost shattered at this prospect, and he was on the verge of confessing the untruth of his purpose, when it occurred to him that torture on the puncturing pillory could hardly be worse than the agony he suffered in the unendurable attitude from which he had just been released.

"If I have to die or torture, I don't see that there's much choice between these two ways," he concluded. "So here goes, hoping I'll be able to pull the wool over his eyes."

"The truth is this," he continued aloud with a camouflage of desperation, "and may my native land never know of my traitorous act. There's really no need of my begging you to have mercy on me after you've learned the truth from me, for I shall be so ashamed of my cowardice that I shan't be satisfied until I find a place where I can hide my face from every other man on earth."

As he spoke Phil covertly watched the coun-

tenance of Topoff and was gratified with the evidence of growing and expectant interest that he saw there.

"You people," he continued, looking his captor straight in the eye, "perfected the submarine and used it as a most destructive war engine. America has just completed her invention of the subterrene, and will soon be able with it to undermine any battle front you may be able to establish."

"What is the subterrene?" demanded "the count," leaning forward eagerly.

"The word, I think, will explain itself to a man of your learning," replied the boy, recalling his flattery weapon. "It's a machine that bores a hole seven or eight feet in diameter right through the earth at the rate of about a mile a day. It was through the first tunnel of the first machine delivered at the battle front that I led a company of soldiers into the basement of one of those buildings behind your lines near Chateau Thierry."

"And who invented that machine?" inquired the now excited and somewhat bewildered Topoff.

"Thomas A. Edison," Phil answered, uttering that magic name with a swelling of hero worship and national pride.

The count meditated a few moments. It was

evident that he was deeply impressed with his prisoner's story.

"How many of those machines has the American army?" he asked.

"Of course, I can't say as to that," Phil replied slowly. "But there's only one at the part of the front with which I'm familiar. However, I understand they're being made as rapidly as possible to be rushed all along the American, English, and French fronts."

Again Topoff lapsed into meditation. This time he was silent longer than before. Then suddenly he looked up sharply at his "fabulizing informant" and said:

"Here is an important question that needs more than any other to be answered: What becomes of the excavated earth as the tunnel advances?"

This was surely a "stunner of a question" and tested Phil's ingenuity to the limit. When it first "hit" him it made the boy's head swim, but he clenched his fists and gritted his teeth with desperation and thought as he had never thought before. An answer came, such as it was, and Phil communicated it with all the aplomb that he could command.

"I'm not very familiar with the mechanical working of the contrivance," he said, "although I've seen it operate. The question you

ask, of course, involves the problem of the great principle of the invention. The way I get it is this: It seems that Mr. Edison, in working out his scheme, applied a new scientific discovery of his, electro-chemical, they call it. By means of this new process they seem to be able to convert the excavated earth into gas and a small amount of powdered refuse. The gas is piped back through flexible tubes, and the refuse is carted out in a low, narrow auto-truck."

Phil had good cause, as he proceeded with this explanation, to congratulate himself on the training he had received in a Philadelphia technical school. But he never knew with what degree of credence the latter part of his ingenious fabrication was received. He had scarcely finished the statement last recorded, when sound of the hurried tramping of many feet reached his ears. It reached the ears also of "Count Topoff," who sprang to his feet in bewildered alarm. Then the forms of half a dozen armed men rushed into the room.

"Marines!" gasped Phil in amazement. "How in the world did they get here?"

CHAPTER XLII

RESCUED

"COUNT TOPOFF" undoubtedly did not appreciate the situation, or he would not have acted so rashly. He drew a pistol and fired point blank at the soldier in the lead. This was a signal for the Americans to answer in a business-like manner, which they did without ceremony, and "Mr. Boaconstrictor" dropped dead with several bullets in his body. Two of the Marines were wounded by the one shot fired by the mysterious "relative of the kaiser," but not seriously.

This was the extent of the battle. The soldiers had taken possession of the chateau without other resistance. The British spy had prepared the way for the raid, having managed to get information to the allies of conditions at the century-old castle. He did this by means of Morse-code signaling to a fleet of American aviators just returning from an air raid over enemy territory, and it was answered with assurance that they would return prepared to raid the place.

There were only six prisoners in the chateau,

but three of them were French and American spies with information of great importance. There were also only half a dozen boche guards in the place, including the orderly who had acted as Topoff's personal servant. All but the latter were men of advanced age, too old for military service, and, as the fleet of aeroplanes that had arrived with a score of soldiers, could not carry the released prisoners and the captured boches very well, the latter were given their freedom as the raiders flew away, back behind the American lines.

On the way Phil rode in a large machine with the British spy, whose resourcefulness may have saved him from further untold torture and, it may be, death, for Phil subsequently grew extremely doubtful of his ability to make his "subterrene yarn stick."

The spy's name was Roscoe Chance. He proved to be an excellent type for impersonating almost any Caucasian nationality, and as he had studied German at college and spoke the language fluently he had been chosen as specially gifted to handle the secret service work that was consummated by the air raid which resulted in the rescue of Phil from the most fiendish torture.

Before they started on their return to the American lines, Chance gave Phil the follow-

ing brief account of the history of the mysterious "Count Topoff":

"He was a Prussian spy in France for twenty years, owning the chateau in which he lived. He pretended to be a great friend of the French cause, had even become a citizen of France to camouflage the real nature of his business. But an English spy in Berlin heard a rumor that Topoff was a relative of the kaiser and reported this to his government. I was therefore sent here to find out what I could.

"But it seems he was on guard against the very thing I was after, and I was unable to detect a suspicious look or act until after the last big drive of the enemy. Meanwhile I had managed to convey to him the idea on a number of occasions that my sympathies were on the other side of the Rhine, so that I was in a position to take up the role of a boche when he revealed his true colors.

"I made quite a hit with him, and found that he was in constant secret communication with Berlin. His second lieutenancy was a mere camouflage, for he was high up in secret service rank. I got considerable corroboration of the report that he was a relative of the kaiser, but no direct confirmation."

"There's just one peculiarity about him that I'd like to understand," said Phil. "Why did

he run so much risk of being killed by mixing in infantry battles right at the front?"

"There's only one reason I can give for that," Chance replied, "and I think it's the true one. He was a clever, shrewd rascal, but also a brazen daredevil. There's no doubt he had lots of courage, and it's a wonder he wasn't killed long ago. In spite of his misshapen physique he was powerful and quite active. He seemed to have almost a mania for proving that his big girth was no obstacle to his putting up just as good a fight as a slender athlete could put up."

The squadron of aeroplanes made the return trip without encountering an enemy plane. No doubt there were boche air-fighters within sighting distance, but it is also probably true that they could not muster sufficient available force to meet the Yanks, so they remained in hiding. Two days later Phil met Tim, who had been transferred temporarily from trench duty to Headquarters messenger service, and they had a half hour's conversation over their recent experiences. He met also Dan Fentress and Emmet Harding, two of the twelve Marines who made their escape from the boche prison in advance of the remaining 240. They had managed to get back with the American army in a manner similar to the scheme worked by

the larger body of prisoners. The other ten, Phil learned months afterward, were recaptured by the enemy and finally were returned, after the armistice, as released prisoners of war.

And, oh, yes, by the way, before the signing of the armistice, which meant virtually the end of the war, Phil was wearing the bar of a lieutenant, and Corporal Tim became a sergeant.

WILLIAM WILSON

What say of it? what say CONSCIENCE grim,
That spectre in my path?

Chamberlain's Pharronida.

Let me call myself, for the present, William Wilson. The fair page now lying before me need not be sullied with my real appellation. This has been already too much an object for the scorn—for the horror—for the detestation of my race. To the uttermost regions of the globe have not the indignant winds bruited its unparalleled infamy? Oh, outcast of all outcasts most abandoned! to the earth art thou not forever dead? to its honors, to its flowers, to its golden aspirations? and a cloud, dense, dismal, and limitless, does it not hang eternally between thy hopes and heaven?

I would not, if I could, here or to-day, embody a record of my later years of unspeakable misery, and unpardonable crime. This epoch—these later years—took unto themselves a sudden elevation in turpitude, whose origin alone it is my present purpose to assign. Men usually grow base by degrees. From me, in an instant, all virtue dropped bodily as a mantle. From comparatively trivial wickedness I passed, with the stride of a giant, into more than the enormities of an Elah-Gabalus. What chance—what one event brought this evil thing to pass, bear with me while I relate. Death approaches; and the shadow which foreruns him has thrown a softening influence over my spirit. I long, in passing through the dim valley, for the sympathy—I had nearly said for the pity—of my fellow-men. I would fain have them believe that I have been, in some measure, the slave of circumstances beyond human control. I would wish them to seek out for me, in the details I am about to give, some little oasis of

fatality amid a wilderness of error. I would have them allow —what they cannot refrain from allowing—that, although temptation may have erewhile existed as great, man was never *thus*, at least, tempted before—certainly, never *thus* fell. And is it therefore that he has never thus suffered? Have I not indeed been living in a dream? And am *I* not now dying a victim to the horror and the mystery of the wildest of all sublunary visions?

I am the descendant of a race whose imaginative and easily excitable temperament has at all times rendered them remarkable; and, in my earliest infancy, I gave evidence of having fully inherited the family character. As I advanced in years it was more strongly developed; becoming, for many reasons, a cause of serious disquietude to my friends, and of positive injury to myself. I grew self-willed, addicted to the wildest caprices, and a prey to the most ungovernable passions. Weak-minded, and beset with constitutional infirmities akin to my own, my parents could do but little to check the evil propensities which distinguished me. Some feeble and ill-directed efforts resulted in complete failure on their part, and, of course, in total triumph on mine. Thenceforward my voice was a household law; and at an age when few children have abandoned their leading-strings, I was left to the guidance of my own will, and became, in all but name, the master of my own actions.

My earliest recollections of a school-life are connected with a large, rambling, Elizabethan house, in a misty-looking village of England, where were a vast number of gigantic and gnarled trees, and where all the houses were excessively ancient. In truth, it was a dream-like and spirit-soothing place, that venerable old town. At this moment, in fancy, I feel the refreshing chilliness of its deeply shadowed avenues, inhale the fragrance of its thousand shrubberies, and thrill anew with undefinable delight at the deep hollow note of the church-bell, breaking, each hour, with sullen and sudden roar, upon the stillness of the dusky atmosphere in which the fretted Gothic steeple lay imbedded and asleep.

It gives me, perhaps, as much of pleasure as I can now in any manner experience, to dwell upon minute recollections of the school and its concerns. Steeped in misery as I am—misery, alas! only too real—I shall be pardoned for seeking relief, however slight and temporary, in the weakness of a few rambling details. These, moreover, utterly trivial, and even

ridiculous in themselves, assume, to my fancy, adventitious importance, as connected with a period and a locality when and where I recognize the first ambiguous monitions of the destiny which afterward so fully overshadowed me. Let me then remember.

The house, I have said, was old and irregular. The grounds were extensive, and a high and solid brick wall, topped with a bed of mortar and broken glass, encompassed the whole. This prison-like rampart formed the limit of our domain; beyond it we saw but thrice a week—once every Saturday afternoon, when, attended by two ushers, we were permitted to take brief walks in a body through some of the neighboring fields—and twice during Sunday, when we were paraded in the same formal manner to the morning and evening service in the one church of the village. Of this church the principal of our school was pastor. With how deep a spirit of wonder and perplexity was I wont to regard him from our remote pew in the gallery, as, with step solemn and slow, he ascended the pulpit! This reverend man, with countenance so demurely benign, with robes so glossy and so clerically flowing, with wig so minutely powdered, so rigid and so vast,—could this be he who, of late, with sour visage, and in snuffy habiliments, administered, ferule in hand, the Draconian Laws of the academy? Oh, gigantic paradox, too utterly monstrous for solution.

At an angle of the ponderous wall frowned a more ponderous gate. It was riveted and studded with iron bolts, and surmounted with jagged iron spikes. What impression of deep awe did it inspire! It was never opened save for the three periodical egressions and ingressions already mentioned; then, in every creak of its mighty hinges, we found a plenitude of mystery—a world of matter for solemn remark, or for more solemn meditation.

The extensive enclosure was irregular in form, having many capacious recesses. Of these, three or four of the largest constituted the play-ground. It was level, and covered with fine hard gravel. I well remember it had no trees, nor benches, nor anything similar within it. Of course it was in the rear of the house. In front lay a small parterre, planted with box and other shrubs, but through this sacred division we passed only upon rare occasions indeed—such as a first advent to school or final departure thence, or perhaps, when a parent or friend having called for us, we joyfully took our way home for the Christmas or Midsummer holidays.

But the house!—how quaint an old building was this!—to me how veritably a palace of enchantment! There was really no end to its windings—to its incomprehensible subdivisions. It was difficult, at any given time, to say with certainty upon which of its two stories one happened to be. From each room to every other there were sure to be found three or four steps either in ascent or descent. Then the lateral branches were innumerable—inconceivable—and so returning in upon themselves, that our most exact ideas in regard to the whole mansion were not very far different from those with which we pondered upon infinity. During the five years of my residence here, I was never able to ascertain with precision, in what remote locality lay the little sleeping apartment assigned to myself and some eighteen or twenty other scholars.

The school-room was the largest in the house—I could not help thinking, in the world. It was very long, narrow, and dismally low, with pointed Gothic windows and a ceiling of oak. In a remote and terror-inspiring angle was a square enclosure of eight or ten feet, comprising the *sanctum*," during hours," of our principal, the Reverend Dr. Bransby. It was a solid structure, with massy door, sooner than open which in the absence of the "Dominie," we would all have willingly perished by the *peine forte et dure*. In other angles were two other similar boxes, far less reverenced, indeed, but still greatly matters of awe. One of these was the pulpit of the "classical" usher, one of the "English and mathematical." Interspersed about the room, crossing and recrossing in endless irregularity, were innumerable benches and desks, black, ancient, and time-worn, piled desperately with much-bethumbed books, and so beseamed with initial letters, names at full length, grotesque figures, and other multiplied efforts of the knife, as to have entirely lost what little of original form might have been their portion in days long departed. A huge bucket with water stood at one extremity of the room, and a clock of stupendous dimensions at the other.

Encompassed by the massy walls of this venerable academy, I passed, yet not in tedium or disgust, the years of the third lustrum of my life. The teeming brain of childhood requires no external world of incident to occupy or amuse it; and the apparently dismal monotony of a school was replete with more intense excitement than my riper youth has derived from luxury, or my full manhood from crime. Yet I must believe that my first mental development had in it much of the uncommon

—even much of the *outré*. Upon mankind at large the events of very early existence rarely leave in mature age any definite impression. All is gray shadow—a weak and irregular remembrance—an indistinct regathering of feeble pleasures and phantasmagoric pains. With me this is not so. In childhood I must have felt with the energy of a man what I now find stamped upon memory in lines as vivid, as deep, and as durable as the *exergues* of the Carthaginian medals.

Yet in fact—in the fact of the world's view—how little was there to remember! The morning's awakening, the nightly summons to bed; the connings, the recitations; the periodical half-holidays, and perambulations; the play-ground, with its broils, its pastimes, its intrigues—these, by a mental sorcery long forgotten, were made to involve a wilderness of sensation, a world of rich incident, a universe of varied emotion, of excitement the most passionate and spirit-stirring. "*Oh, le bon temps, que ce siècle de fer!*"

In truth, the ardor, the enthusiasm, and the imperiousness of my disposition, soon rendered me a marked character among my schoolmates, and by slow, but natural gradations, gave me an ascendancy over all not greatly older than myself; —over all with a single exception. This exception was found in the person of a scholar who, although no relation, bore the same Christian and surname as myself—a circumstance, in fact, little remarkable; for, notwithstanding a noble descent, mine was one of those every-day appellations which seem, by prescriptive right, to have been, time out of mind, the common property of the mob. In this narrative I have therefore designated myself as William Wilson—a fictitious title not very dissimilar to the real. My namesake alone, of those who in school phraseology constituted "our set," presumed to compete with me in the studies of the class—in the sports and broils of the play-ground—to refuse implicit belief in my assertions, and submission to my will—indeed, to interfere with my arbitrary dictation in any respect whatsoever. If there is on earth a supreme and unqualified despotism, it is the despotism of a master-mind in boyhood over the less energetic spirits of its companions.

Wilson's rebellion was to me a source of the greatest embarrassment; the more so as, in spite of the bravado with which in public I made a point of treating him and his pretensions, I secretly felt that I feared him, and could not help thinking the equality which he maintained so easily with my

self, a proof of his true superiority; since not to be overcome cost me a perpetual struggle. Yet this superiority—even this equality—was in truth acknowledged by no one but myself; our associates, by some unaccountable blindness, seemed not even to suspect it. Indeed, his competition, his resistance and especially his impertinent and dogged interference with my purposes, were not more pointed than private. He appeared to be destitute alike of the ambition which urged, and of the passionate energy of mind which enabled me to excel. In his rivalry he might have been supposed actuated solely by a whimsical desire to thwart, astonish, or mortify myself; although there were times when I could not help observing, with a feeling made up of wonder, abasement, and pique, that he mingled with his injuries, his insults, or his contradictions, a certain most inappropriate, and assuredly most unwelcome, *affectionateness* of manner. I could only conceive this singular behavior to arise from a consummate self-conceit assuming the vulgar airs of patronage and protection.

Perhaps it was this latter trait in Wilson's conduct, conjoined with our identity of name, and the mere accident of our having entered the school upon the same day, which set afloat the notion that we were brothers, among the senior classes in the academy. These do not usually inquire with much strictness into the affairs of their juniors. I have before said, or should have said, that Wilson was not, in the most remote degree, connected with my family. But assuredly, if we *had* been brothers we must have been twins; for, after leaving Dr. Bransby's, I casually learned that my namesake was born on the nineteenth of January, 1813—and this is a somewhat remarkable coincidence; for the day is precisely that of my own nativity.

It may seem strange that, in spite of the continual anxiety occasioned me by the rivalry of Wilson, and his intolerable spirit of contradiction, I could not bring myself to hate him altogether. We had, to be sure, nearly every day a quarrel in which, yielding me publicly the palm of victory, he in some manner contrived to make me feel that it was he who had deserved it; yet a sense of pride on my part, and a veritable dignity on his own, kept us always upon what are called "speaking terms," while there were many points of strong congeniality in our tempers, operating to awake in me a sentiment which our position alone, perhaps, prevented from ripening into friendship. It is difficult indeed, to define or even to describe

my real feelings toward him. They formed a motley and heterogeneous admixture—some petulant animosity, which was not yet hatred, some esteem, more respect, much fear, with a world of uneasy curiosity. To the moralist it will be unnecessary to say, in addition, that Wilson and myself were the most inseparable of companions.

It was no doubt the anomalous state of affairs existing between us, which turned all my attacks upon him (and they were many, either open or covert) into the channel of banter or practical joke (giving pain while assuming the aspect of mere fun), rather than into a more serious and determined hostility. But my endeavors on this head were by no means uniformly successful, even when my plans were the most wittily concocted; for my namesake had much about him, in character, of that unassuming and quiet austerity which, while enjoying the poignancy of its own jokes, has no heel of Achilles in itself, and absolutely refuses to be laughed at. I could find, indeed, but one vulnerable point, and that, lying in a personal peculiarity, arising perhaps from constitutional disease, would have been spared by any antagonist less at his wit's end than myself—my rival had a weakness in the faucial or guttural organs, which precluded him from raising his voice at any time *above a very low whisper*. Of this defect I did not fail to take what poor advantage lay in my power.

Wilson's retaliations in kind were many; and there was one form of his practical wit that disturbed me beyond measure. How his sagacity first discovered at all that so petty a thing would vex me, is a question I never could solve; but having discovered, he habitually practised the annoyance. I had always felt aversion to my uncourtly patronymic, and its very common, if not plebeian prænomen. The words were venom in my ears; and when, upon the day of my arrival, a second William Wilson came also to the academy, I felt angry with him for bearing the name, and doubly disgusted with the name because a stranger bore it, who would be the cause of its twofold repetition, who would be constantly in my presence, and whose concerns, in the ordinary routine of the school business, must inevitably, on account of the detestable coincidence, be often confounded with my own.

The feeling of vexation thus engendered grew stronger with every circumstance tending to show resemblance, moral or physical, between my rival and myself. I had not then discovered the remarkable fact that we were of the same age; but

I saw that we were of the same height, and I perceived that we were even singularly alike in general contour of person and outline of feature. I was galled, too, by the rumor touching a relationship, which had grown current in the upper forms. In a word, nothing could more seriously disturb me (although I scrupulously concealed such disturbance), than any allusion to a similarity of mind, person, or condition existing between us. But, in truth, I had no reason to believe that (with the exception of the matter of relationship, and in the case of Wilson himself), this similarity had ever been made a subject of comment, or even observed at all by our schoolfellows. That *he* observed it in all its bearings, and as fixedly as I, was apparent; but that he could discover in such circumstances so fruitful a field of annoyance, can only be attributed, as I said before, to his more than ordinary penetration.

His cue, which was to perfect an imitation of myself, lay both in words and in actions; and most admirably did he play his part. My dress it was an easy matter to copy; my gait and general manner were, without difficulty, appropriated; in spite of his constitutional defect, even my voice did not escape him. My louder tones were, of course, unattempted, but then the key, it was identical, *and his singular whisper, it grew the very echo of my own.*

How greatly this most exquisite portraiture harassed me (for it could not justly be termed a caricature), I will not now venture to describe. I had but one consolation—in the fact that the imitation, apparently, was noticed by myself alone, and that I had to endure only the knowing and strangely sarcastic smiles of my namesake himself. Satisfied with having produced in my bosom the intended effect, he seemed to chuckle in secret over the sting he had inflicted, and was characteristically disregardful of the public applause which the success of his witty endeavors might have so easily elicited. That the school, indeed, did not feel his design, perceive its accomplishment, and participate in his sneer, was, for many anxious months, a riddle I could not resolve. Perhaps the *gradation* of his copy rendered it not so readily perceptible; or, more possibly, I owed my security to the masterly air of the copyist, who, disdaining the letter (which in a painting is all the obtuse can see), gave but the full spirit of his original for my individual contemplation and chagrin.

I have already more than once spoken of the disgusting air

of patronage which he assumed toward me, and of his frequent officious interference with my will. This interference often took the ungracious character of advice; advice not openly given, but hinted or insinuated. I received it with repugnance which gained strength as I grew in years. Yet, at this distant day, let me do him the simple justice to acknowledge that I can recall no occasion when the suggestions of my rival were on the side of those errors or follies so usual to his immature age and seeming inexperience; that his moral sense, at least, if not his general talents and worldly wisdom, was far keener than my own; and that I might, to-day, have been a better, and thus a happier man, had I less frequently rejected the counsels embodied in those meaning whispers which I then but too cordially hated and too bitterly despised.

As it was, I at length grew restive in the extreme under his distasteful supervision, and daily resented more and more openly what I considered his intolerable arrogance. I have said that, in the first years of our connection as schoolmates, my feelings in regard to him might have been easily ripened into friendship; but, in the latter months of my residence at the academy, although the intrusion of his ordinary manner had, beyond doubt, in some measure, abated, my sentiments, in nearly similar proportion, partook very much of positive hatred. Upon one occasion he saw this, I think, and afterward avoided, or made a show of avoiding me.

It was about the same period, if I remember aright, that, in an altercation of violence with him, in which he was more than usually thrown off his guard, and spoke and acted with an openness of demeanor rather foreign to his nature, I discovered, or fancied I discovered, in his accent, his air, and general appearance, a something which first startled, and then deeply interested me, by bringing to mind dim visions of my earliest infancy—wild, confused and thronging memories of a time when memory herself was yet unborn. I cannot better describe the sensation which oppressed me than by saying that I could with difficulty shake off the belief of my having been acquainted with the being who stood before me, at some epoch very long ago—some point of the past even infinitely remote. The delusion, however, faded rapidly as it came; and I mention it at all but to define the day of the last conversation I there held with my singular namesake.

The huge old house, with its countless subdivisions, had several large chambers communicating with each other, where

slept the greater number of the students. There were, however (as must necessarily happen in a building so awkardly planned), many little nooks or recesses, the odds and ends of the structure; and these the economic ingenuity of Dr. Bransby had also fitted up as dormitories; although, being the merest closets, they were capable of accommodating but a single individual. One of these small apartments was occupied by Wilson.

One night, about the close of my fifth year at the school, and immediately after the altercation just mentioned, finding every one wrapped in sleep, I arose from bed, and, lamp in hand, stole through a wilderness of narrow passages from my own bedroom to that of my rival. I had long been plotting one of those ill-natured pieces of practical wit at his expense in which I had hitherto been so uniformly unsuccessful. It was my intention, now, to put my scheme in operation and I resolved to make him feel the whole extent of the malice with which I was imbued. Having reached his closet, I noiselessly entered, leaving the lamp, with a shade over it, on the outside. I advanced a step, and listened to the sound of his tranquil breathing. Assured of his being asleep, I returned, took the light, and with it again approached the bed. Close curtains were around it, which, in the prosecution of my plan, I slowly and quietly withdrew, when the bright rays fell vividly upon the sleeper, and my eyes at the same moment upon his countenance. I looked—and a numbness, an iciness of feeling instantly pervaded my frame. My breast heaved, my knees tottered, my whole spirit became possessed with an objectless yet intolerable horror. Gasping for breath, I lowered the lamp in still nearer proximity to the face. Were these,—*these* the lineaments of William Wilson? I saw, indeed, that they were his, but I shook as if with a fit of the ague, in fancying they were not. What *was* there about them to confound me in this manner? I gazed—while my brain reeled with a multitude of incoherent thoughts. Not thus he appeared—assuredly not *thus*—in the vivacity of his waking hours. The same name! the same contour of person! the same day of arrival at the academy! And then his dogged and meaningless imitation of my gait, my voice, my habits, and my manner! Was it, in truth, within the bounds of human possibility, that *what I now saw* was the result, merely, of the habitual practice of this sarcastic imitation? Awe-stricken, and with a creeping shudder, I extinguished the lamp, passed silently

from the chamber, and left, at once, the halls of that old academy, never to enter them again.

After a lapse of some months, spent at home in mere idleness, I found myself a student at Eton. The brief interval had been sufficient to enfeeble my remembrance of the events at Dr. Bransby's, or at least to effect a material change in the nature of the feelings with which I remembered them. The truth—the tragedy—of the drama was no more. I could now find room to doubt the evidence of my senses; and seldom called up the subject at all but with wonder at the extent of human credulity, and a smile at the vivid force of the imagination which I hereditarily possessed. Neither was this species of scepticism likely to be diminished by the character of the life I led at Eton. The vortex of thoughtless folly into which I there so immediately and so recklessly plunged washed away all but the froth of my past hours, ingulfed at once every solid or serious impression, and left to memory only the veriest levities of a former existence.

I do not wish, however, to trace the course of my miserable profligacy here—a profligacy which set at defiance the laws, while it eluded the vigilance of the institution. Three years of folly, passed without profit, had but given me rooted habits of vice, and added, in a somewhat unusual degree, to my bodily stature, when, after a week of soulless dissipation, I invited a small party of the most dissolute students to a secret carousal in my chambers. We met at a late hour of the night; for our debaucheries were to be faithfully protracted until morning. The wine flowed freely, and there were not wanting other and perhaps more dangerous seductions; so that the gray dawn had already faintly appeared in the east, while our delirious extravagance was at its height. Madly flushed with cards and intoxication, I was in the act of insisting upon a toast of more than wonted profanity, when my attention was suddenly diverted by the violent, although partial unclosing of the door of the apartment, and by the eager voice of a servant from without. He said that some person, apparently in great haste, demanded to speak with me in the hall.

Wildly excited with wine, the unexpected interruption rather delighted than surprised me. I staggered forward at once, and a few steps brought me to the vestibule of the building. In this low and small room there hung no lamp; and now no light at all was admitted, save that of the exceed-

ingly feeble dawn which made its way through the semi-circular window. As I put my foot over the threshold, I became aware of the figure of a youth about my own height, and habited in a white kerseymere morning frock, cut in the novel fashion of the one I myself wore at the moment. This the faint light enabled me to perceive; but the features of his face I could not distinguish. Upon my entering, he strode hurriedly up to me, and, seizing me by the arm with a gesture of petulant impatience, whispered the words "William Wilson!" in my ear.

I grew perfectly sober in an instant.

There was that in the manner of the stranger, and in the tremulous shake of his uplifted finger, as he held it between my eyes and the light, which filled me with unqualified amazement; but it was not this which had so violently moved me. It was the pregnancy of solemn admonition in the singular, low, hissing utterance; and, above all, it was the character, the tone, *the key*, of those few, simple, and familiar, yet *whispered* syllables, which came with a thousand thronging memories of by-gone days, and struck upon my soul with the shock of a galvanic battery. Ere I could recover the use of my senses he was gone.

Although this event failed not of a vivid effect upon my disordered imagination, yet was it evanescent as vivid. For some weeks, indeed, I busied myself in earnest inquiry, or was wrapped in a cloud of morbid speculation. I did not pretend to disguise from my perception the identity of the singular individual who thus perseveringly interfered with my affairs, and harassed me with his insinuated counsel. But who and what was this Wilson?—and whence came he?—and what were his purposes? Upon neither of these points could I be satisfied—merely ascertaining, in regard to him, that a sudden accident in his family had caused his removal from Dr. Bransby's academy on the afternoon of the day in which I myself had eloped. But in a brief period I ceased to think upon the subject, my attention being all absorbed in a contemplated departure for Oxford. Thither I soon went, the uncalculating vanity of my parents furnishing me with an outfit and annual establishment, which would enable me to indulge at will in the luxury already so dear to my heart—to vie in profuseness of expenditure with the haughtiest heirs of the wealthiest earldoms in Great Britain.

Excited by such appliances to vice, my constitutional tem-

perament broke forth with redoubled ardor, and I spurned even the common restraints of decency in the mad infatuation of my revels. But it were absurd to pause in the detail of my extravagance. Let it suffice, that among spendthrifts I out-Heroded Herod, and that, giving name to a multitude of novel follies, I added no brief appendix to the long catalogue of vices then usual in the most dissolute university of Europe.

It could hardly be credited, however, that I had, even here, so utterly fallen from the gentlemanly estate, as to seek acquaintance with the vilest arts of the gambler by profession, and, having become an adept in his despicable science, to practice it habitually as a means of increasing my already enormous income at the expense of the weak-minded among my fellow-collegians. Such, nevertheless, was the fact. And the very enormity of this offence against all manly and honorable sentiment proved, beyond doubt, the main if not the sole reason of the impunity with which it was committed. Who, indeed, among my most abandoned associates, would not rather have disputed the clearest evidence of his senses, than have suspected of such courses the gay, the frank, the generous William Wilson—the noblest and most liberal commoner at Oxford—him whose follies (said his parasites) were but the follies of youth and unbridled fancy—whose errors but inimitable whim—whose darkest vice but a careless and dashing extravagance?

I had been now two years successfully busied in this way, when there came to the university a young *parvenu* nobleman, Glendinning—rich, said report, as Herodes Atticus—his riches, too, as easily acquired. I soon found him of weak intellect, and, of course, marked him as a fitting subject for my skill. I frequently engaged him in play, and contrived, with the gambler's usual art, to let him win considerable sums, the more effectually to entangle him in my snares. At length, my schemes being ripe, I met him (with the full intention that this meeting should be final and decisive) at the chambers of a fellow-commoner (Mr. Preston), equally intimate with both, but who, to do him justice, entertained not even a remote suspicion of my design. To give to this a better coloring, I had contrived to have assembled a party of some eight or ten, and was solicitously careful that the introduction of cards should appear accidental, and originate in the proposal of my contemplated dupe himself. To be brief upon a vile topic, none of the low finesse was omitted, so customary upon similar occa-

sions, that it is a just matter for wonder how any are still found so besotted as to fall its victim.

We had protracted our sitting far into the night, and I had at length effected the manœuvre of getting Glendinning as my sole antagonist. The game, too, was my favorite *écarté*. The rest of the company, interested in the extent of our play, had abandoned their own cards, and were standing around us as spectators. The *parvenu*, who had been induced by my artifices in the early part of the evening, to drink deeply, now shuffled, dealt, or played, with a wild nervousness of manner for which his intoxication, I thought, might partially, but could not altogether account. In a very short period he had become my debtor to a large amount, when, having taken a long draught of port, he did precisely what I had been coolly anticipating—he proposed to double our already extravagant stakes. With a well-feigned show of reluctance, and not until after my repeated refusals had seduced him into some angry words which gave a color of *pique* to my compliance, did I finally comply. The result, of course, did but prove how entirely the prey was in my toils: in less than an hour he quadrupled his debt. For some time his countenance had been losing the florid tinge lent it by the wine; but now, to my astonishment, I perceived that it had grown to a pallor truly fearful. I say, to my astonishment. Glendinning had been represented to my eager inquiries as immeasurably wealthy; and the sums which he had as yet lost, although in themselves vast, could not, I supposed, very seriously annoy, much less so violently affect him. That he was overcome by the wine just swallowed, was the idea which most readily presented itself; and, rather with a view to the preservation of my own character in the eyes of my associates, than from any less interested motive, I was about to insist, peremptorily, upon a discontinuance of the play, when some expression at my elbow from among the company, and an ejaculation evincing utter despair on the part of Glendinning, gave me to understand that I had effected his total ruin under circumstances which, rendering him an object for the pity of all, should have protected him from the ill offices even of a fiend.

What now might have been my conduct it is difficult to say. The pitiable condition of my dupe had thrown an air of embarrassed gloom over all; and, for some moments, a profound silence was maintained, during which I could not help feeling my cheeks tingle with the many burning glances

of scorn or reproach cast upon me by the less abandoned of the party. I will even own that an intolerable weight of anxiety was for a brief instant lifted from my bosom by the sudden and extraordinary interruption which ensued. The wide, heavy folding doors of the apartment were all at once thrown open, to their full extent, with a vigorous and rushing impetuosity that extinguished, as if by magic, every candle in the room. Their light, in dying, enabled us just to perceive that a stranger had entered, about my own height, and closely muffled in a cloak. The darkness, however, was now total; and we could only *feel* that he was standing in our midst. Before any one of us could recover from the extreme astonishment into which this rudeness had thrown all, we heard the voice of the intruder.

"Gentlemen," he said, in a low, distinct, and never-to-be-forgotten *whisper* which thrilled to the very marrow of my bones, "gentlemen, I make no apology for this behavior, because, in thus behaving, I am but fulfilling a duty. You are, beyond doubt, uninformed of the true character of the person who has to-night won at *écarté* a large sum of money from Lord Glendinning. I will therefore put you upon an expeditious and decisive plan of obtaining this very necessary information. Please to examine, at your leisure, the inner linings of the cuff of his left sleeve, and the several little packages which may be found in the somewhat capacious pockets of his embroidered morning wrapper."

While he spoke, so profound was the stillness that one might have heard a pin drop upon the floor. In ceasing, he departed at once, and as abruptly as he had entered. Can I—shall I describe my sensations? Must I say that I felt all the horrors of the damned? Most assuredly I had little time for reflection. Many hands roughly seized me upon the spot, and lights were immediately re-procured. A search ensued. In the lining of my sleeve were found all the court cards essential in *écarté*, and, in the pockets of my wrapper, a number of packs, fac-similes of those used at our sittings, with the single exception that mine were of the species called, technically, *arrondees;* the honors being slightly convex at the ends, the lower cards slightly convex at the sides. In this disposition, the dupe who cuts, as customary, at the length of the pack, will invariably find that he cuts his antagonist an honor; while the gambler, cutting at the breadth, will, as

certainly, cut nothing for his victim which may count in the records of the game.

Any burst of indignation upon this discovery would have affected me less than the silent contempt, or the sarcastic composure with which it was received.

"Mr. Wilson," said our host, stooping to remove from beneath his feet an exceedingly luxurious cloak of rare furs, "Mr. Wilson, this is your property." (The weather was cold; and, upon quitting my own room, I had thrown a cloak over my dressing wrapper, putting it off upon reaching the scene of play.) "I presume it is supererogatory to seek here (eyeing the folds of the garment with a bitter smile) for any farther evidence of your skill. Indeed, we have had enough. You will see the necessity, I hope, of quitting Oxford—at all events, of quitting instantly my chambers."

Abased, humbled to the dust as I then was, it is probable that I should have resented this galling language by immediate personal violence, had not my whole attention been at the moment arrested by a fact of the most startling character. The cloak which I had worn was a rare description of fur; how rare, how extravagantly costly, I shall not venture to say. Its fashion, too, was of my own fantastic invention; for I was fastidious to an absurd degree of coxcombry, in matters of this frivolous nature. When, therefore, Mr. Preston reached me that which he had picked up upon the floor, and near the folding-doors of the apartment, it was with an astonishment nearly bordering upon terror, that I perceived my own already hanging on my arm (where I had no doubt unwittingly placed it), and that the one presented to me was but its exact counterpart in every, in even the minutest possible particular. The singular being who had so disastrously exposed me, had been muffled, I remembered, in a cloak; and none had been worn at all by any of the members of our party, with the exception of myself. Retaining some presence of mind, I took the one offered me by Preston; placed it, unnoticed, over my own; left the apartment with a resolute scowl of defiance; and, next morning ere dawn of day, commenced a hurried journey from Oxford to the continent, in a perfect agony of horror and of shame.

I fled in vain. My evil destiny pursued me as if in exultation, and proved, indeed, that the exercise of its mysterious dominion had as yet only begun. Scarcely had I set foot in Paris, ere I had fresh evidence of the detestable inter

est taken by this Wilson in my concerns. Years flew, while I experienced no relief. Villain! at Rome, with how untimely, yet with how spectral an officiousness, stepped he in between me and my ambition! At Vienna, too—at Berlin—and at Moscow! Where, in truth, had I *not* bitter cause to curse him within my heart? From his inscrutable tyranny did I at length flee, panic-stricken, as from a pestilence; and to the very ends of the earth *I fled in vain.*

And again, and again, in secret communion with my own spirit, would I demand the questions "Who is he? whence came he? and what are his objects?" But no answer was there found. And now I scrutinized, with a minute scrutiny, the forms, and the methods, and the leading traits of his impertinent supervision. But even here there was very little upon which to base a conjecture. It was noticeable, indeed, that, in no one of the multiplied instances in which he had of late crossed my path, had he so crossed it except to frustrate those schemes, or to disturb those actions, which, if fully carried out, might have resulted in bitter mischief. Poor justification, this, in truth, for an authority so imperiously assumed? Poor indemnity for natural rights of self-agency so pertinaciously, so insultingly denied!

I had also been forced to notice that my tormentor, for a very long period of time (while scrupulously and with miraculous dexterity maintaining his whim of an identity of apparel with myself), had so contrived it, in the execution of his varied interference with my will, that I saw not, at any moment, the features of his face. Be Wilson what he might, *this*, at least, was but the veriest of affectation, or of folly. Could he, for an instant, have supposed that, in my admonisher at Eton—in the destroyer of my honor at Oxford—in him who thwarted my ambition at Rome, my revenge at Paris, my passionate love at Naples, or what he falsely termed my avarice in Egypt—that in this, my arch-enemy and evil genius, I could fail to recognize the William Wilson of my school-boy days—the namesake, the companion, the rival—the hated and dreaded rival at Dr. Bransby's? Impossible! But let me hasten to the last eventful scene of the drama.

Thus far I had succumbed supinely to this imperious domination. The sentiment of deep awe with which I habitually regarded the elevated character, the majestic wisdom, the apparent omnipresence and omnipotence of Wilson, added to a feeling of even terror, with which certain other traits in his

nature and assumption inspired me, had operated, hitherto, to impress me with an idea of my own utter weakness and helplessness, and to suggest an implicit, although bitterly reluctant submission to his arbitary will. But, of late days, I had given myself up entirely to wine; and its maddening influence upon my hereditary temper rendered me more and more impatient of control. I began to murmur—to hesitate—to resist. And was it only fancy which induced me to believe that, with the increase of my own firmness, that of my tormentor underwent a proportional diminution? Be this as it may, I now began to feel the inspiration of a burning hope, and at length nurtured in my secret thoughts a stern and desperate resolution that I would submit no longer to be enslaved.

It was at Rome, during the carnival of 18—, that I attended a masquerade in the palazzo of the Neapolitan Duke Di Broglio. I had indulged more freely than usual in the excesses of the wine-table; and now the suffocating atmosphere of the crowded rooms irritated me beyond endurance. The difficulty, too, of forcing my way through the mazes of the company contributed not a little to the ruffling of my temper; for I was anxiously seeking (let me not say with what unworthy motive) the young, the gay, the beautiful wife of the aged and doting Di Broglio. With a too unscrupulous confidence she had previously communicated to me the secret of the costume in which she would be habited, and now, having caught a glimpse of her person, I was hurrying to make my way into her presence. At this moment I felt a light hand placed upon my shoulder, and that ever-remembered, low, damnable *whisper* within my ear.

In an absolute frenzy of wrath, I turned at once upon him who had thus interrupted me, and seized him violently by the collar. He was attired, as I had expected, in a costume altogether similar to my own; wearing a Spanish cloak of blue velvet, begirt about the waist with a crimson belt sustaining a rapier. A mask of black silk entirely covered his face.

"Scoundrel!" I said, in a voice husky with rage, while every syllable I uttered seemed as new fuel to my fury; "scoundrel! impostor! accursed villain! you shall not—you *shall not* dog me unto death! Follow me, or I stab you where you stand!" and I broke my way from the ball-room into a small ante-chamber adjoining, dragging him unresistingly with me as I went.

Upon entering, I thrust him furiously from me. He staggered

gered against the wall, while I closed the door with an oath, and commanded him to draw. He hesitated but for an instant; then, with a slight sigh, drew in silence, and put himself upon his defence.

The contest was brief indeed. I was frantic with every species of wild excitement, and felt within my single arm the energy and power of a multitude. In a few seconds I forced him by sheer strength against the wainscoting, and thus, getting him at mercy, plunged my sword, with brute ferocity, repeatedly through and through his bosom.

At that instant some person tried the latch of the door. I hastened to prevent an intrusion, and then immediately returned to my dying antagonist. But what human language can adequately portray *that* astonishment, *that* horror which possessed me at the spectacle then presented to view? The brief moment in which I averted my eyes had been sufficient to produce, apparently, a material change in the arrangements at the upper or farther end of the room. A large mirror—so at first it seemed to me in my confusion—now stood where none had been perceptible before; and, as I stepped up to it in extremity of terror, mine own image, but with features all pale and dabbled in blood, advanced to meet me with a feeble and tottering gait.

Thus it appeared, I say, but was not. It was my antagonist—it was Wilson, who then stood before me in the agonies of his dissolution. His mask and cloak lay, where he had thrown them, upon the floor. Not a thread in all his raiment—not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments of his face which was not, even in the most absolute identity, *mine own!*

It was Wilson; but he spoke no longer in a whisper, and I could have fancied that I myself was speaking while he said:

"*You have conquered, and I yield. Yet, henceforward art thou also dead—dead to the World, to Heaven, and to Hope! In me didst thou exist; and, in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself.*"

BERENICE.

Dicebant mihi sodales, si sepulchrum amicæ visitarem, curas meas aliquam tulum fore levatas.—*Ebn Zaiat.*

Misery is manifold. The wretchedness of earth is multiform. Overreaching the wide horizon as the rainbow, its hues are as various as the hues of that arch—as distinct too, yet as intimately blended. Overreaching the wide horizon as the rainbow! How is it that from beauty I have derived a type of unloveliness?—from the covenant of peace, a simile of sorrow? But as, in ethics, evil is a consequence of good, so, in fact, out of joy is sorrow born. Either the memory of past bliss is the anguish of to-day, or the agonies which *are*, have their origin in the ecstasies which *might have been*.

My baptismal name is Egæus; that of my family I will not mention. Yet there are no towers in the land more time-honored than my gloomy, gray, hereditary halls. Our line has been called a race of visionaries; and in many striking particulars—in the character of the family mansion, in the frescos of the chief saloon, in the tapestries of the dormitories, in the chiselling of some buttresses in the armory, but more especially in the gallery of antique paintings, in the fashion of the library chamber, and, lastly, in the very peculiar nature of the library's contents—there is more than sufficient evidence to warrant the belief.

The recollections of my earliest years are connected with that chamber, and with its volumes—of which latter I will say no more. Here died my mother. Herein was I born. But it is mere idleness to say that I had not lived before—that the soul has no previous existence. You deny it? Let us not argue the matter. Convinced myself, I seek not to convince. There is, however, a remembrance of aërial forms, of spiritual and meaning eyes, of sounds musical yet sad; a remembrance

which will not be excluded; a memory like a shadow—vague, variable, indefinite, unsteady; and like a shadow, too, in the impossibility of my getting rid of it while the sunlight of my reason shall exist.

In that chamber was I born. Thus awaking from the long night of what seemed, but was not, nonentity, at once into the very regions of fairy land—into a palace of imagination, into the wild dominions of monastic thought and erudition—it is not singular that I gazed around me with a startled and ardent eye—that I loitered away my boyhood in books, and dissipated my youth in revery; but it *is* singular, that, as years rolled away, and the noon of manhood found me still in the mansion of my fathers, it *is* wonderful what stagnation there fell upon the springs of my life—wonderful how total an inversion took place in the character of my commonest thought. The realities of the world affected me as visions, and as visions only, while the wild ideas of the land of dreams became, in turn, not the material of my every-day existence, but in very deed that existence utterly and solely in itself.

. . . . . .

Berenice and I were cousins, and we grew up together in my paternal halls. Yet differently we grew—I, ill of health, and buried in gloom—she, agile, graceful, and overflowing with energy; hers the ramble on the hill-side—mine, the studies of the cloister; I, living within my own heart, and addicted, body and soul, to the most intense and painful meditation—she, roaming carelessly through life, with no thought of the shadows in her path, or the silent flight of the raven-winged hours. Berenice!—I call upon her name—Berenice! and from the gray ruins of memory a thousand tumultuous recollections are startled at the sound! Ah, vividly is her image before me now, as in the early days of her light-heartedness and joy! Oh, gorgeous yet fantastic beauty! Oh, sylph amid the shrubberies of Arnheim! Oh, Naiad among its fountains! And then—then all is mystery and terror, and a tale which should not be told. Disease—a fatal disease, fell like the simoon upon her frame; and, even while I gazed upon her, the spirit of change swept over her, pervading her mind, her habits, and her character, and, in a manner the most subtle and terrible, disturbing even the identity of her person! Alas! the destroyer came and went! and the victim—where is she? I knew her not—or knew her no longer as Berenice!

Among the numerous train of maladies superinduced by that fatal and primary one which effected a revolution of so horrible a kind in the moral and physical being of my cousin, may be mentioned as the most distressing and obstinate in its nature, a species of epilepsy not unfrequently terminating in *trance* itself—trance very nearly resembling positive dissolution, and from which her manner of recovery was, in most instances, startlingly abrupt. In the meantime, my own disease—for I have been told that I should call it by no other appellation—my own disease, then, grew rapidly upon me, and assumed finally a monomaniac character of a novel and extraordinary form—hourly and momentarily gaining vigor—and at length obtaining over me the most incomprehensible ascendency. This monomania, if I must so term it, consisted in a morbid irritability of those properties of the mind in metaphysical science termed the *attentive*. It is more than probable that I am not understood; but I fear, indeed, that it is in no manner possible to convey to the mind of the merely general reader, an adequate idea of that nervous *intensity of interest* with which, in my case, the powers of meditation (not to speak technically) busied and buried themselves, in the contemplation of even the most ordinary objects of the universe.

To muse for long unwearied hours, with my attention riveted to some frivolous device on the margin or in the typography of a book; to become absorbed, for the better part of a summer's day, in a quaint shadow falling aslant upon the tapestry or upon the floor; to lose myself, for an entire night, in watching the steady flame of a lamp, or the embers of a fire; to dream away whole days over the perfume of a flower; to repeat, monotonously, some common word, until the sound, by dint of frequent repetition ceased to convey any idea whatever to the mind; to lose all sense of motion or physical existence, by means of absolute bodily quiescence long and obstinately persevered in: such were a few of the most common and least pernicious vagaries induced by a condition of the mental faculties, not, indeed, altogether unparalleled, but certainly bidding defiance to anything like analysis or explanation.

Yet let me not be misapprehended. The undue, earnest, and morbid attention thus excited by objects in their own nature frivolous, must not be confounded in character with that ruminating propensity common to all mankind, and more especially indulged in by persons of ardent imagination. It

was not even, as might be at first supposed, an extreme condition, or exaggeration of such propensity, but primarily and essentially distinct and different. In the one instance, the dreamer, or enthusiast, being interested by an object usually *not* frivolous, imperceptibly loses sight of this object in a wilderness of deductions and suggestions issuing therefrom, until, at the conclusion of a day-dream *often replete with luxury*, he finds the *incitamentum*, or first cause of his musings, entirely vanished and forgotten. In my case, the primary object was *invariably frivolous*, although assuming, through the medium of my distempered vision, a refracted and unreal importance. Few deductions, if any, were made; and those few pertinaciously returning in upon the original object as a centre. The meditations were *never* pleasurable; and, at the termination of the revery, the first cause, so far from being out of sight, had attained that supernaturally exaggerated interest which was the prevailing feature of the disease. In a word, the powers of mind more particularly exercised were, with me, as I have said before, the *attentive*, and are, with the day-dreamer, the *speculative*.

My books, at this epoch, if they did not actually serve to irritate the disorder, partook, it will be perceived, largely, in their imaginative and inconsequential nature, of the characteristic qualities of the disorder itself. I well remember, among others, the treatise of the noble Italian, Cœlius Secundus Curio, "*De Amplitudine Beati Regni Dei;*" St. Austin's great work, "The City of God;" and Tertullian's "*De Carne Christi,*" in which the paradoxical sentence, "*Mortuus est Dei filius; credibile est quia ineptum est; et sepultus resurrexit; certum est quia impossibile est,*" occupied my undivided time, for many weeks of laborious and fruitless investigation.

Thus it will appear that, shaken from its balance only by trivial things, my reason bore resemblance to that ocean-crag spoken of by Ptolemy Hephestion, which steadily resisting the attacks of human violence, and the fiercer fury of the waters and the winds, trembled only to the touch of the flower called Asphodel. And although, to a careless thinker, it might appear a matter beyond doubt, that the alteration produced by her unhappy malady, in the *moral* condition of Berenice, would afford me many objects for the exercise of that intense and abnormal meditation whose nature I have been at some trouble in explaining, yet such was not in any degree the case. In the lucid intervals of my infirmity, her calamity,

indeed, gave me pain, and, taking deeply to heart that total wreck of her fair and gentle life, I did not fail to ponder, frequently and bitterly, upon the wonder-working means by which so strange a revolution had been so suddenly brought to pass. But these reflections partook not of the idiosyncrasy of my disease, and were such as would have occurred, under similar circumstances, to the ordinary mass of mankind. True to its own character, my disorder revelled in the less important but more startling changes wrought in the *physical* frame of Berenice—in the singular and most appalling distortion of her personal identity.

During the brightest days of her unparalleled beauty, most surely I had never loved her. In the strange anomaly of my existence, feelings with me *had never been* of the heart, and my passions *always were* of the mind. Through the gray of the early morning—among the trellised shadows of the forest at noonday—and in the silence of my library at night—she had flitted by my eyes, and I had seen her—not as the living and breathing Berenice, but as the Berenice of a dream; not as a being of the earth, earthy, but as the abstraction of such a being; not as a thing to admire, but to analyze; not as an object of love, but as the theme of the most abstruse although desultory speculation. And *now*—now I shuddered in her presence, and grew pale at her approach; yet, bitterly lamenting her fallen and desolate condition, I called to mind that she had loved me long, and, in an evil moment, I spoke to her of marriage.

And at length the period of our nuptials was approaching, when, upon an afternoon in the winter of the year—one of those unseasonably warm, calm, and misty days which are the nurse of the beautiful Halcyon,*—I sat (and sat, as I thought, alone), in the inner apartment of the library. But, uplifting my eyes, I saw that Berenice stood before me.

Was it my own excited imagination—or the misty influence of the atmosphere—or the uncertain twilight of the chamber—or the gray draperies which fell around her figure—that caused in it so vacillating and indistinct an outline? I could not tell. She spoke no word; and I—not for worlds could I have uttered a syllable. An icy chill ran through my frame; a sense of insufferable anxiety oppressed me; a consuming

* For as Jove, during the winter season, gives twice seven days of warmth, men have called this clement and temperate time the nurse of the beautiful Halcyon.—*Simonides.*

curiosity pervaded my soul; and, sinking back upon the chair, I remained for some time breathless and motionless, with my eyes riveted upon her person. Alas! its emaciation was excessive, and not one vestige of the former being lurked in any single line of the contour. My burning glances at length fell upon the face.

The forehead was high, and very pale, and singularly placid; and the once jetty hair fell partially over it, and overshadowed the hollow temples with innumerable ringlets, now of a vivid yellow, and jarring discordantly, in their fantastic character, with the reigning melancholy of her countenance. The eyes were lifeless, and lustreless, and seemingly pupilless, and I shrank involuntarily from their glassy stare to the contemplation of the thin and shrunken lips. They parted; and in a smile of peculiar meaning, *the teeth* of the changed Berenice disclosed themselves slowly to my view. Would to God that I had never beheld them, or that, having done so, I had died!

. . . . . .

The shutting of a door disturbed me, and, looking up, I found that my cousin had departed from the chamber. But from the disordered chamber of my brain, had not, alas! departed, and would not be driven away, the white and ghastly *spectrum* of the teeth. Not a speck on their surface—not a shade on their enamel—not an indenture in their edges—but what that brief period of her smile had sufficed to brand in upon my memory. I saw them *now* even more unequivocally than I beheld them *then*. The teeth!—the teeth!—they were here, and there, and everywhere, and visibly and palpably before me; long, narrow, and excessively white, with the pale lips writhing about them, as in the very moment of their first terrible development. Then came the full fury of my *monomania*, and I struggled in vain against its strange and irresistible influence. In the multiplied objects of the eternal world I had no thoughts but for the teeth. For these I longed with a frenzied desire. All other matters and all different interests became absorbed in their single contemplation. They—they alone were present to the mental eye, and they, in their sole individuality, became the essence of my mental life. I held them in every light. I turned them in every attitude. I surveyed their characteristics. I dwelt upon their peculiarities. I pondered upon their conformation. I mused upon the alteration in their nature. I shuddered as I assigned to them,

in imagination, a sensitive and sentient power, and, even when unassisted by the lips, a capability of moral expression. Of Madamoiselle Salle it has been well said, "*Que tous ses pas etaient des sentiments,*" and of Berenice I more seriously believed *que tous ses dents etaient des idees. Des idees!*—ah, here was the idiotic thought that destroyed me! *Des idees!*—ah, *therefore* it was that I coveted them so madly! I felt that their possession could alone ever restore me to peace, in giving me back to reason.

And the evening closed in upon me thus—and then the darkness came, and tarried, and went—and the day again dawned—and the mists of a second night were now gathering around—and still I sat motionless in that solitary room—and still I sat buried in meditation—and still the *phantasma* of the teeth maintained its terrible ascendency, as, with the most vivid and hideous distinctness, it floated about amid the changing lights and shadows of the chamber. At length there broke in upon my dreams a cry as of horror and dismay; and thereunto, after a pause, succeeded the sound of troubled voices, intermingled with many low moanings of sorrow or of pain. I arose from my seat, and throwing open one of the doors of the library, saw standing out in the antechamber a servant maiden, all in tears, who told me that Berenice was—no more! She had been seized with epilepsy in the early morning, and now, at the closing of the night, the grave was ready for its tenant, and all the preparations for the burial were completed.

. . . . . .

I found myself sitting in the library, and again sitting there alone. It seemed that I had newly awakened from a confused and exciting dream. I knew that it was now midnight, and I was well aware, that since the setting of the sun, Berenice had been interred. But of that dreary period which intervened I had no positive, at least no definite comprehension. Yet its memory was replete with horror—horror more horrible from being vague, and terror more terrible from ambiguity. It was a fearful page in the record of my existence, written all over with dim, and hideous, and unintelligible recollections. I strived to decipher them, but in vain; while ever and anon, like the spirit of a departed sound, the shrill and piercing shriek of a female voice seemed to be ringing in my ears. I had done a deed—what was it? I asked myself

the question aloud, and the whispering echoes of the chamber answered me,—"*What was it?*"

On the table beside me burned a lamp, and near it lay a little box. It was of no remarkable character, and I had seen it frequently before, for it was the property of the family physician; but how came it *there*, upon my table, and why did I shudder in regarding it? These things were in no manner to be accounted for, and my eyes at length dropped to the open pages of a book, and to a sentence underscored therein. The words were the singular but simple ones of the poet Ebn Zaiat:—"*Dicebant mihi sodales si sepulchrum amicæ visitarem, curas meas aliquantulum fore levatas.*" Why, then, as I perused them, did the hairs of my head erect themselves on end, and the blood of my body become congealed within my veins?

There came a light tap at the library door—and, pale as the tenant of a tomb, a menial entered upon tiptoe. His looks were wild with terror, and he spoke to me in a voice tremulous, husky, and very low. What said he?—some broken sentences I heard. He told me of a wild cry disturbing the silence of the night—of the gathering together of the household—of a search in the direction of the sound; and then his tones grew thrillingly distinct as he whispered me of a violated grave—of a disfigured body enshrouded, yet still breathing—still palpitating—*still alive!*

He pointed to my garments; they were muddy and clotted with gore. I spoke not, and he took me gently by the hand: it was indented with the impress of human nails. He directed my attention to some object against the wall. I looked at it for some minutes: it was a spade. With a shriek I bounded to the table, and grasped the box that lay upon it. But I could not force it open; and, in my tremor, it slipped from my hands, and fell heavily, and burst into pieces; and from it, with a rattling sound, there rolled out some instruments of dental surgery, intermingled with thirty-two small white, and ivory-looking substances that were scattered to and fro about the floor.

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